



Bird Watching

A Bird-Watcher's Year in New Brunswick

By
D. KERMODE PARR

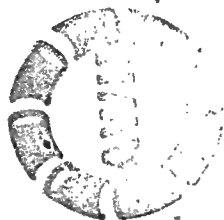
Illustrations By
AILEEN WOOLRIDGE



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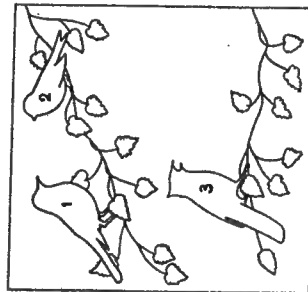
For June and Jim

SET IN 12 POINT GARAMOND
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☆ ☆ ☆



Cover design by W. W. WERTHMAN

1. Robin
2. Goldfinch
3. Blue Jay

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PREFACE

Bird-watching is a fascinating game. Any number can play — and every year that passes more and more do. There are no rules, the whole outdoors is available as the ground. No uniform is needed, nor are special sticks or rackets required. Those who become interested, though, do tend to acquire the characteristic equipment of the bird-watcher: a pair of field-glasses and a bird book of the field guide type.

This book, of course, is not a field guide to use in the identification of birds. For that purpose a pocket-sized book showing the complete range of birds for the region with coloured illustrations is essential. My recommendation always is Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds*. On every drive or walk the bird-watcher should take his Peterson along.

The enthusiastic can go bird-watching at all seasons and in most kinds of weather. In days excessively stormy they can always sit at home and read about the experiences of others. So here is this book.

It is not the diary of a single year, but a composite: notes of observations over a dozen years, arranged in the convenient framework of a calendar of months. All the material has been earlier printed in my twice-a-week column, "Mixed Cargo", in *The Daily Gleaner* or read in radio talks from the C.B.C.'s Fredericton station.

Within each month the pieces are arranged not in any order but rather in the manner of a bird-watching ramble. Such phrases as "last Tuesday" have been discarded but otherwise the original form has been kept. This explains the use of "we" and "I" in adjacent items. While my wife lived she was my inseparable companion in bird-watching, so the portions with the plural subject are a few years earlier than the remainder.

There are in these chapters accounts of both rare and common birds, for all birds are interesting and beautiful. Every bird-watcher notices other varieties of wildlife, too, and from time to time I have included something of the behaviour, casually observed, of deer, chipmunk or bear. But the main thing is birds.

I should add that there is nothing scientific or systematic about my bird-watching. I am not an ornithologist or any other kind of trained "-ologist", but just an amateur who gets an enormous amount of enjoyment out of roaming the countryside looking at birds.

At the end I have two appendices that I hope will prove useful and interesting. One is a list of all the species of birds that have been recorded in the New Brunswick Museum. The other is a list of books that I have found useful or interesting or both. This is not intended to be inclusive. It names only books, some rather battered now, to be found on my own shelves.

Some years ago Aileen Clare, a very talented young artist then on the staff of *The Atlantic Advocate*, did some black-and-white illustrations for an article of mine on bird-watching in that magazine. These I treasured, as also the witty cartoon of "Bird Watching". The artist, now Mrs. Fred Woolridge of Corner Brook, Newfoundland, responded to a request to do some more to put with them in this book. So here they are, as chapter headings, scattered through the longer chapters, and the cartoon as a frontispiece. These birds seem to me very attractive portraits, both lifelike and lively.

And so *Good Birding All!*

D. KERMODE PARR



Evening Grosbeak

JANUARY

Highroad Birds in Winter

Highroad birds, in my vocabulary, are those that may be seen from main highways. They are therefore the species I am likely to observe in January and February. In summer I like to drive along all kinds of side roads to look for birds, but in winter those ways are not for the elderly to explore. Digging out a car stuck in a snowdrift is a pastime strictly for the young and vigorous.

Fortunately, quite a number of varieties of birds can be observed by driving slowly along main roads, ready to stop the moment any small thing with wings is noticed. Our provincial highway service people do a marvellous job of snow clearing, too.

One January Saturday afternoon a short excursion, just eight or ten miles up the Royal Road, produced several Canada jays, one blue jay and several crows. Then as I sat watching one of the "gorbies" from the car, a female pine grosbeak arrived in the next tree. It was joined a moment later by a male, and what could be more colourful in winter against a background of snow and dark evergreens?

Peterson's *Field Guide* describes the male pine grosbeak as "rosy-red with two white wing-bars" the female "grey . . . head and rump tinged with dull yellow." In Godfrey's *The Birds of Canada* the male has "general coloration dull red (dull pinkish red in winter, light poppy red in summer)" and the female "general colour plain grey, the crown and rump yellowish olive to russet". Those are good descriptions of this nine-inch winter finch, but they do not convey the living glow in the red and ochre so evident when you see them in a tree by the roadside.

The pine grosbeak has of course the big beak of its family, but dark, in contrast to the ivory tone of the bills of the evening and rose-breasted grosbeaks.

The pine grosbeak is said to be very fond of rowan berries, and I know it likes high-bush cranberries, for my wife and I once watched a group busy on such bushes in a Frederickton garden.

Behaviour of pine grosbeaks on one occasion in Ontario provided a wonderful example of how exasperating "erratic" appearances can be. A mixed flock put in an appearance on our lawn, a dozen pine grosbeaks with twenty-five or thirty evening grosbeaks. That reminds me that another food that seems to be popular with both these species is Manitoba maple seeds, for that was the attraction then.

It was the first time we had seen pine grosbeaks and a friend suggested that it might easily be twenty years before we saw any more, so irregular are their wanderings. So we notified a colleague of mine on the school faculty who was a keen bird-watcher. Within half an hour, when he had a spare period, he dashed down, but the grosbeaks had vanished. He had to go back for another class forty minutes later. Five minutes after his departure, the grosbeaks returned to the Manitoba maples! They left ten minutes before our all-day intermittent guest got back. Both the teacher and the grosbeak flock put in several more appearances, but never at the same time.

It was in fact about fifteen years, and in a different province, before we saw any more pine grosbeaks. In New

Brunswick they are to be seen more frequently, mostly in winter.

Rare Bohemian Waxwings

One Saturday in January was not a day for birds, though the countryside was beautiful in the wintry light. We went along the Nashwaak to Taymouth and back, but except for a few house sparrows here and there, the only birds we saw were three or four ravens.

In the evening Mr. Peter Pearce telephoned to tell us he had seen a flock of Bohemian waxwings in Manguerville, so naturally we chose that road for a drive in the sunshine on Sunday.

Through Manguerville to Sheffield, out to Lakeville and part way home, there were few birds to watch. Here and there pine grosbeaks appeared, in twos and threes, and we saw crows in two places. Then, returning through what had seemed empty territory, we began to find a considerable population of birds. At several spots we found flocks of a dozen or a score of the colourful pine grosbeaks. With some of them in trees near a farm there were house sparrows and chickadees. A mile from there we saw a dozen redpolls.

Then suddenly came a remarkable, exciting quarter-hour. We saw birds in some apple trees near the road and stopped to have a look at one more flock of pine grosbeaks . . . and there with them were the Bohemian waxwings we had been hoping to find!

We had never seen Bohemian waxwings before.

This species is like the other, the cedar waxwing that is one of our common birds. It has the same silky brown plumage, the same upstanding crest, black mask on the eyes, and yellow tail tip, but with the striking differences of conspicuous white marks on the wings, and chestnut-red under the tail.

This is a bird that breeds in the Canadian north-west, and wanders erratically in winter (Taverner says "Bohemian" is in the sense "gypsy") into the south and east. It turns up in New Brunswick only rarely, being reported perhaps once in a dozen years.

While we stood looking at the birds, another car stopped alongside. It had aboard another group of bird-watchers headed by Mr. Melvin Moore, and some more happy enthusiasts began to make notes as my wife and I had done of their first Bohemian waxwings.

The waxwings and the pine grosbeaks formed a mixed group, busy with the rotted apples still hanging on the trees. Suddenly I heard Mr. Moore exclaim: "A robin! A real robin!" It flew in and joined the other birds. Several robins have been reported as apparently staying in this neighborhood for the winter.

So for a time we enjoyed a gorgeous picture, a bird pageant in browns and greys and blacks with the rosy red of the male grosbeaks, the dark yellow of the females, the bright yellow tail tips and the chestnut-red under tail coverts of the waxwings, the bright brick orange of the robin. Then in contrast a splash of bright blue was added as a blue jay alighted in one of the trees.

It was a memorable afternoon.

Fox on the Snow

It was mid-way between McGowan's corner and Jemseg that we saw the fox trotting slowly across a snow-covered field. He crossed between two clumps of bushes and disappeared behind the second. By the time we had the car stopped and binoculars focussed he came out again at the other end of the narrow strip, twenty or thirty yards long, of dogwood and other shrubs, and we were able to watch him for four or five minutes just the width of a field away.

The fox seemed a well-grown animal with a fine bushy tail. He continued on his way for another twenty yards, then looped nearly an about-turn and headed back on a slanting line towards the wood beyond the field.

Then he stopped. Evidently something caught his attention and he began to stalk it. One pace forward, deliberately, then stop. Head down, another slow step. A perceptible pause, another cautious step forward, another halt in the slow-motion advance.

Whatever he was after must then have got away, a mouse into some hole, perhaps, for he suddenly resumed his gentle trot. Soon he vanished into bushes again and we saw him no more.

It would be impossible, I think, for anyone seeing a fox not to be interested in him. That has been true since the dawn of history and in every country where foxes are to be found. No other animal of the wild has appeared so often in literature, in a range of story, legend and poetry from Aesop's fables to Uncle Remus. It was the mediaeval French satirical epic, *Le Roman de Renart*, that gave the fox his familiar nickname of Reynard in English, while the "Renart", as *renard*, almost completely displaced the word "goupil" for fox in French.

There were not many birds that day, but we saw nine or ten of the rough-legged hawks and also the hawk-owl that have been in that area for some weeks.

Bird Far From Home

Every bird-watcher likes to observe rare or strange birds. So when a telephone call from a reader one January morning told me that among the birds she was feeding in her garden there were a robin, a blackbird and a varied thrush, I was interested.

A robin in the depths of winter is always a cheerful sight, so the same day my wife and I went to look. The varied thrush I really did not have much faith in. As Dr. Austin Squires had remarked to me not long before, "We get many reports of varied thrushes, but they always turn out to be robins."

Still, it could be. There had been such a bird in New Brunswick once, a few years ago, one of the rarest of accidents.

A definition is advisable here. An "accidental" means to an ornithologist or bird-watcher a bird that turns up where it has utterly no business to be, that should not occur in the region where it is found at all. Roger Tory Peterson

classifies as accidentals, in his *Field Guide*, those birds that have been recorded fewer than twenty times in eastern North America. If you found, for instance, a European lapwing somewhere on the New Brunswick coast, that would be an accidental.

So we drove out to see what we might see.

No varied thrush should be in York County, New Brunswick, nor in any part of eastern Canada at all. In Taverner's *Birds of Canada*, the note on distribution of this species is: "Western North America. In Canada, British Columbia, and the Yukon, east to the Mackenzie, and adjacent parts of Alberta. Occasional east to Manitoba."

When we found the house, Mrs. Folland showed us her feeding-table for the birds. On the ground beneath it was a robin. Then on a tree about twenty feet away I saw a strange bird, something altogether new to me.

It was indeed a varied thrush!

Naturally before setting out I had read up carefully the description of the varied thrush, and I knew what I was looking for. All the same, when I saw this bird with a shade of red breast that was almost orange, marked with a bold black bar across it, I was startled. I won't say that I thought then of how Keats described the experience of "stout Cortez" when he and his men

*Looked at each other with a wild surmise
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.*

That only occurred to me afterwards but it strikes the right note.

Taverner's description of the varied thrush is this: "Length ten inches. About the size of a robin and very robin-like in general appearance, but strikingly unlike in details of colour. Like a robin with sharp, black breast-bar, reddish eyebrow-line, wing-bars and spots on flight feathers." He calls the breast colour "slightly pale tawny-red." It may be added that the wing-bars of reddish-orange are odd, a pattern of short bars at different angles, and that the eyebrow "line" is a quite broad streak across the side of the head.

Mrs. Folland had been absolutely correct in her identification of the bird from the picture in a book she has, and I was sure of the species when I saw it. All the same I wanted confirmation, so I passed word to Mr. Peter Pearce, who went out with two other experienced observers the next day and saw it, with complete agreement on the identification.

As a matter of fact, it was not difficult to find, for it has been frequenting that garden most of the day for weeks.

The winter wanderings of birds are often strange, both the regular migrations and the erratic movements, but mostly the birds travel in flocks. Why do rough-legged hawks turn up most winters, a couple of dozen of them, in the area between McGowan's Corner and Jemseg, but hardly anywhere else in York, Sunbury or Queens counties? Why do flocks of Bohemian waxwings travel from the west to the Maritimes some winters only, maybe one in ten or fifteen years?

Most peculiar are the travels of single birds. Why did this varied thrush set off eastward from Alberta or British Columbia and keep going, resting and feeding here and there on the way, until it reached New Brunswick?



Hairy Woodpecker

FEBRUARY

A Garden Full of Birds

One February afternoon I happened to be driving through New Maryland, so, of course, I stopped to say hello to my friends Mr. and Mrs. Morais. That meant, as it always does, combining a visit with bird-watching. I don't know of any place that provides more in the way of birds at a feeding station.

In ten miles along the road, through a landscape of forest edges and snow-covered fields beautiful in the wintry sunshine, I had seen only two birds. In the Morais garden there were dozens of birds, belonging to eight different species, all to be watched in comfort over a cup of tea, and at close quarters, for they were feeding in small trees just outside the window, most of them within four or five yards.

There were chickadees of both our species, mostly the black-capped, but with boreal or brown-capped among them. It might have been several boreal, or one returning on repeated visits. Chickadees are lively things, ceaselessly on the move and even if actually making a lengthy full meal they will be out to neighbouring trees and back a score of times, flitting about every fifteen or twenty seconds.

Red-breasted nuthatches came. There were a dozen house sparrows and one starling. Blue jays arrived, went off, were back again in a few minutes. One Canada jay flew in, and in quick succession a pair of hairy woodpeckers.

I noticed that while chickadees, nuthatches and woodpeckers dig in their claws on a hanging piece of suet and eat straight from the lump, a blue jay prefers to tear off a corner, a scrap maybe an inch or two across, and move with it to another branch where it can hold it under one foot and eat at leisure.

The hairy woodpeckers were the most beautiful I had ever seen, I think, especially the male bird. It must have been about maximum size for the species. The black parts of its plumage were utterly, intensely black, sharply defined against the spotless, shining white, and the red patches on the back of its head were of so brilliant a scarlet that they seemed to glow in the sunshine.

Rare Winter Visitors

Early February is a time when occasionally a mockingbird may turn up in someone's garden where food is being provided. It is accidental in New Brunswick, of course, and as a rule does not survive the cold spell with a few nights of twenty-five below zero temperatures that is usual in this month.

One February I was able, through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Pettigrove to watch another very rare bird that had lived through just such a week of bitter weather. This was a brown thrasher, a species that belongs to the same family of *Mimidae* (mockingbirds and thrashers).

The brown thrasher is classified as "casual" in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (Godfrey: *The Birds of Canada*); as "very rare summer resident" in *The Birds of New Brunswick*; and in a paper delivered in 1960 Dr. Squires adds: "This species has become only slightly commoner over the years . . ." Only one record before 1939 and in the following twenty years "seven records covering all seasons of the year and culminating with an individual which spent January and February 1960 near a feeder in Saint John." Since then, he tells me, there has just been the occasional individual observed, and not every year at that.

The thrasher that I watched in the Pettigrove garden seemed to have made itself firmly at home. It ate seeds steadily, not in the least disturbed by the hasty flight and return every few seconds of a small flock of sparrows, restless in their manner at every movement of a shadow. Sometimes, I was told, the thrasher will break open peanuts and eat them on the spot, differing from the blue jays, which like to fly off some way with the nuts.

Here is the description of the brown thrasher. It is of the same general shape as its close relatives the catbird and the mockingbird, but with a rather heavier, long bill and a definitely longer and narrower tail. In fact, for a beak to tail-tip measurement of $10\frac{1}{2}$ to 12 inches the tail is about 5 inches and the bill 1 inch. The upper parts are all reddish brown; under parts buffy white, the breast, sides and flanks heavily streaked with dark brown. It has two white wing bars and its eyes are yellow.

This was the first time I ever saw a brown thrasher.

Evening Grosbeaks at Feeding Stations

All through the winter there may be some of these brightly beautiful birds at garden feed-tables, but it is often in February that their numbers build up, and they are certainly a joy to watch.

They seem to fly in as soon as it is fully daylight, and will be feeding and flying round most of the day, though they leave earlier in the afternoon than the blue jays and starlings.

The evening grosbeaks are bold birds, quite happy to feed right on a windowsill if you provide there a little box with a mixture of sunflower and other seeds. The sunflower seeds seem to be the main attraction. Grosbeaks on a windowsill are undisturbed by human faces within six inches of the glass on the inside.

It is a curious characteristic of these birds that while they evidently prefer life in little flocks, in company of their kind all day, they each expect to monopolize a feed tray while eating. Even when there isn't a female in the group, just half a dozen males, three at a time are not able to feed peacefully where there is ample room. One perches on the side of the box and jabs with apparent ferocity at the others until they move off. It is usually beak against beak and no harm done. Sometimes when three are present, there seems a bit of combined tactical work on the part of the two being held at bay. While one engages the attention of the defender, the other hops in and grabs a couple of sunflower seeds. This makes the aggressive fellow turn on him angrily, and the third then takes advantage of a quick chance.

It's a circus with feathered clowns.

Squirrels in Winter

It used to be my impression that squirrels, though not hibernating animals, stayed in shelter in very cold weather, coming out to look for food only on mild days during the winter.

If that was ever true, it certainly is not so now. On days of sub-zero temperatures lately the gray squirrels have been out and about, looking for nuts put out in back yards, or visiting bird-feeding stations, here and there in the city.

Were they always like that in winter behaviour?

An English writer of nature notes recently remarked on the way animal habits can be changed by the provision of food, and his particular example was the red squirrel in the Lake District of England. He wrote: "I was brought up in a house beside sprawling woodlands where the squirrels slept away most of the winter, disappearing for long stretches

and reappearing, thin and hungry, in the spring. A friend who feeds red squirrels tells me that even in the bitterest weather hers have never ceased to come, sometimes five at a time. Or is it partly, too, that the recent milder winters have made the squirrels less inclined to sleep?"

Well, we have been having relatively milder winters also, though absolutely there is nothing mild about nights varying from twenty below zero to thirty-seven below. Even such cold did not seem to keep the gray squirrels at home.

It was ten below, in the morning, the day I wrote this, but by breakfast time there was a squirrel at the back door for peanuts.

Hawks and Other Birds

An unusual number of the roughlegged hawks seem to be staying late in this area. They arrive in the late fall and most of them move on by about the middle of January, but at the weekend there were still probably eight or ten here. We saw five in the usual place, down below Sheffield, and Mr. Pearce counted seven there. Then on Sunday we saw one in the neighborhood of Mouth of Keswick.

This was a fine specimen, and after we had watched it for several minutes where it was perched on a birch tree fifty yards from the road, it rose and circled just above us, hardly forty feet up, affording us a splendid view of the white and black pattern of the wings. It flew off and disappeared from view, but when we passed that way coming home an hour later it had returned to its original tree.

There was a small flock of snow buntings up that way, also two ravens and several crows. Down river, too, there were ravens and crows.

Ravens have become much more common in the Province during the past twenty years. It used to be that whenever the bird-watcher saw a crow, which was very often, he took a second look, because it might turn out to be that very uncommon thing, a raven. Now on any country drive you are sure to see half a dozen ravens in twenty miles. The increase is attributed to the great number of motor vehicles

now on the roads. So many more animals and birds are killed that an abundance of food is always available for ravens and other eaters of carrion.

Down river we saw also a shrike, so near to where we had seen one three or four weeks ago that it may well have been the same bird. Shrikes, commonly known as "butcher-birds", are ferocious killers, consuming mainly little birds and mice. For the one we saw and the rough-legged hawks it must be a diet of mice and similar small animals now, for no small birds are about.

Mr. Pearce tells me that the hawk owl is still to be seen in Sheffield occasionally.

It is amusing to observe how firmly a bird may become set in some routine or habitual course of action. There is a hairy woodpecker that we see almost every day in our garden. Always we notice it first at one particular spot, on a crossbar fixed on a clothesline post and bearing several lumps of suet. When it has eaten enough, the woodpecker flies directly to a utility pole twenty feet away and begins to explore and tap from a few feet below the complex of wires, working its way up. It always goes the whole way up, finishing with its head and breast above the top of the pole. There it seems to look round, as though to select the next stopping place, but always it flies off in the same direction anyway.

Eight or ten times I have watched it, but the woodpecker never moves from the suet stand to a tree, though there are a dozen immediately adjacent, it always goes to the utility pole. If ever a creature was "set in its ways", that bird is.



Horned Lark

MARCH

Early Spring Arrivals

March had duly come in like the proverbial lion on a Friday and Saturday was not much of a day either; but Sunday proved sunny and not really cold, so I set off on a drive into likely territory for birds, down Jemseg way.

Before I got on to the Trans-Canada Highway below the Princess Margaret bridge, I saw the usual city pigeons, house sparrows and a few starlings. Then nothing. Through Maugerville, not a bird of any species. Into Sheffield parish and all down to the Jemseg bridge, no birds! Over the bridge I thought I would turn right and drive as far as Lower Jemseg, and I had not gone more than half a mile or so along that road when I saw birds on the roadside.

Horned larks! The earliest date, the 3rd of March, that I had ever seen any.

Now, I know that some horned larks winter in New Brunswick, mostly in coastal areas. But nobody, as far as I knew, had seen any during this winter in the central part of the province, so certainly these had arrived from some-

where. The location of wintering does not set any identification mark on a bird, of course, so possibly these had only been as far as the Fundy shore and were getting a sneak start on the flocks that would be coming to or through New Brunswick. For me, these were the first returning birds of spring and that made them an entrancing sight.

There is something very gay about a little flock of horned larks. The group I saw numbered seven. At first glance they look like sparrows, then you see the odd, almost clownish face. It is yellowish and white against the main dark plumage, with heavy black side-whiskers, so to speak, and a broad black collar curving across the base of the throat. At close quarters you can see the minute black tufts on the head that justify the name of "horned".

They are so swift of movement on the ground, too. The seven I watched were scratching for their gravel on a bare patch of road shoulder, and every few seconds one would decide that there might be better grit a dozen feet away, and it would make a dash. Horned larks are among the birds that walk or run, they don't hop, and their running legs twinkle along at fantastic speed.

It is not hard to get near horned larks for a good look. This time I stopped my car only six or seven yards away and they took no notice. I got out and walked slowly, a step and a pause, towards them. They ignored me. Finally I was within five feet of the nearest one when they moved. All seven rose together and flew . . . but only to swing out behind the car and back to the shoulder of the road, settling down on the ground again hardly ten yards away.

The great majority of the horned larks that we shall see in the next few weeks are on their way through the province to summer homes farther north, but a few do stay and nest. Years ago I saw some with half-grown young on the North Shore.

Arrival of Grackles

One spring the 24 March was the first day for a conspicuous arrival of returning birds.

As I looked out of a window just after getting up in the morning, a grackle flew in. Five minutes later it was joined by two more, which meant that the first one was not the winter lingerer that had been about occasionally.

Another look half an hour later found a count of eight grackles. By noon there were seventeen grackles in the clump of trees that borders our lot. The whole garden when they moved seemed full of grackles.

This flock stayed around all day. On Friday and Saturday there were only two or three visible from time to time, but on Sunday morning a larger flock, about thirty-five of the birds, arrived and filled the trees again. They did not stay long but it emphasized the fact that Thursday's observation had been the real thing, that the grackles were here in force for the spring of 1966.

By the weekend there was much open water in the rivers. The Nashwaak was mostly flowing freely, and down by Maugerville and Sheffield there were many half-mile stretches free of ice. Two or three goldeneyes were swimming near the bank down there, but no other ducks had turned up, apparently. It is early, of course. From the middle of April on is the exciting time for ducks.

For the past few days a couple of blue jays have been coming to a feed tray just outside my kitchen window. They arrive just about the time I have my own breakfast, chase away a small flock of sparrows, and settle down to a good meal.

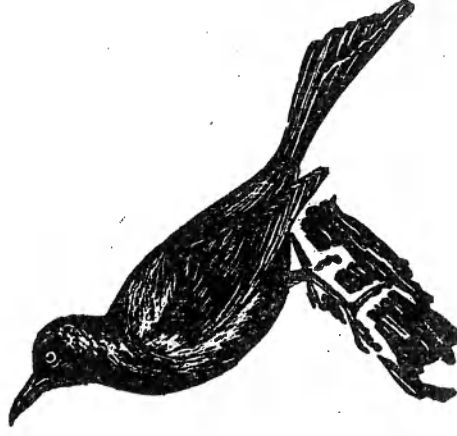
In February the sparrows were there all day and every day. Twice I saw four or five starlings join them, but it is only now that the jays have discovered the place.

They are less jittery than the sparrows, so it is possible to watch them at close quarters. A blue jay feeding always seems to expend a terrific amount of energy. If one of them wants to eat a sunflower seed, he must put it on the edge of the tray, hold it firmly with a claw and whack at it most vigorously to break off the outer shell. Let a blue jay get on to a lump of suet hanging from a branch and he will make a major production of eating a bit. He can't just peck it out with simple head and neck action, he must swing his

whole body from the feet — sway back, round and down — to plunge his bill into the soft suet with appropriate violence.

Roadside Squirrels

On a Saturday we drove up-river, by Keswick Ridge and Bear Island. The landscape was still wintry and there were not many birds. Here and there a raven flapped away over the tree-tops, and along the Ridge three pairs of crows flew by. Once a Canada jay appeared for a moment at the edge of a wood.



Grackle

Somewhere near Bear Island a red squirrel ran across the road, and we stopped to look at him. The squirrel also stopped to look at us.

He had taken up a position on a big log, the trunk of a fallen tree lying on the inner bank of the ditch, which gave the little squirrel a vantage point about on a level with our heads as we sat in the car watching.

He ran to one end, reversed and halted half way along the log. After five or six seconds stillness while he watched us with his left eye, he suddenly did an about-turn with lightning speed and froze again, presumably to consider if we looked any less harmless to his right eye. After a while he dashed to the end of the log and down behind it, only to pop up again to the top immediately.

My wife opened the door a little, silently, and dropped a few peanuts down the snow slope towards him. This did not disturb the squirrel in the slightest, neither did it attract him any closer as long as we were there.

For four or five minutes that red squirrel continued the game, with little rushes at an incredible pace to the end of his log, up into a bush behind it, back again, down under it and over to the nearest tree, returning to sit a moment looking at us. Finally he made off up into the trees. There we saw that he had company, and for a minute or two there were wild scurrings of two squirrels. Then they disappeared.

Half a mile away we came upon three grey squirrels. One of them crossed the road as we stopped, disappearing into a clump of bushes. The other two ran about for a minute or two at the edge of their field, apparently not noticing us, then both of them climbed a telephone pole and sat motionless for minutes at the top, watching us until we decided to drive on.

The grey squirrels are lithe, quick-moving animals, of course, but in comparison with the smaller red squirrel we had watched a little earlier they seemed almost slow and heavy!

That Saturday wasn't a particularly pleasant day, but the squirrels provided a definite note of spring. So did the sight of maples along the roadside all festooned with bright metal pails.

Saw-Whet Owl

Word came from Mrs. Visbach that there was a small owl in the backyard of Avenue Florists, so we went along to see. It proved to be a saw-whet owl. There happened to be a bale of hay in the corner of the building, and the hay had a bit scooped out, so that there was a niche formed, and here the little owl sat in as warm and sheltered a spot as you could imagine.

Peterson calls the saw-whet "an absurdly tame little owl," and this one did not stir when we went within a couple of feet of it.

Little is the right adjective for the saw-whet, for most owls are in the size range of fourteen inches to two feet, but

this one measures only about eight inches. Roundness is a characteristic, too, for its rather round little body is surmounted by a very round "face" in which each of the yellow eyes is set in a circular disc. Its colour is mostly cinnamon brown and white in a general effect of stripes.

The saw-whet owl is mostly to be found, if you can find it, in wooded areas far from human habitation, but Robie Tufts notes: "Sometimes in winter, particularly during spells of extraordinary cold, small numbers appear suddenly, one here and one there, about farmyards, villages and even in towns and cities. Whether these are residents hunger-forced from their normal habitat or are transients from farther north is not known, but generally they are dead or weakened from starvation when found." This seems to be much the same in New Brunswick. One we saw two or three years ago was in March, too, but I have no record of the weather.

The reason for the name is that one of its call notes was supposed to resemble the noise of a saw being whetted or filed. I've never heard one, but Mr. Pearce tells me that when he listened to a saw-whet it sounded more like a "ding-ding-ding-ding"; and Robie Tufts in the Nova Scotia book says he has heard only a note like a metallic tang-tang-tang, continued monotonously for a considerable time. So perhaps "saw-whet" wasn't very appropriate really.

The florists were concerned for the safety of their visitor, for there were children and hunting cats about. It is difficult to know what to do for birds in strange places, other than hope they will take refuge in flight if molested. Mr. Pearce removed this one to a safer location in the woods, but it proved to be too far gone with cold and starvation to survive.

Hawk's Regular Hours

It seems possible that some of the birds we see get into set habits, maybe have a regular round or circuit of places to visit during the day.

One March, there was no change in our garden population of wild birds in two weeks except that the flock of evening grosbeaks slowly but steadily built up. The half

dozen became eight, then eleven, fourteen for several days, and as I write there are seventeen in the gathering. The sparrows and the two or three juncos and occasional six or eight starlings were regulars.

Then on Thursday afternoon, a little after four, a sharp-shinned hawk arrived suddenly and killed one of the small birds. My wife was looking out of the window and saw the hawk swoop down. It must have struck its prey on the ground or close to it, for the impact carried it sliding ten yards along the surface of the snow. It went off almost immediately.

On Friday, same time, the hawk returned, and perched in the neighbour's trees that border on our garden. It stayed nearly half an hour, but found nothing that could serve as food and again disappeared.

On Saturday we were out for a while in the afternoon but decided to get home by four. That would be in time for the sharp-shin if it returned and I might see it too.

At ten past four the hawk flew in!

It perched for five minutes on a low branch, facing away from us, so that we could observe the dark slate-blue back and the long, square-ended tail with its slight notch, the mark that most readily distinguishes this bird from the similar Cooper's hawk. Now and then it would lean on its perch and spread its tail, then close it again.

We went outside for a closer look. The hawk took no notice whatever of human beings thirty yards away. It just turned to face us, then moved up a few feet on the tree, so we could admire the breast, barred horizontally with fine reddish stripes.

After about ten minutes the hawk moved to another cedar and must have found a sparrow hiding there. Both flew out and did a fast circle twice round the tree. The sparrow tried for refuge in the cedar again, but the hawk followed it. Then suddenly the sparrow shot out on one side. Its pursuer had evidently been on the other side and lost twenty yards before it could go fast after its prey. They went down the hill, but evidently the sparrow dodged somehow, for in half a minute the hawk came back without it.

We watched it searching about the cedars for a little longer. Then we decided it was time to clear the grounds for the regular frequenters to come back. So I moved over the snow to chivvy it away. It waited until I was within twenty feet before it finally rose in the air and made off.

The sharp-shinned hawk skipped Sunday but came back on Monday afternoon. On Tuesday it was an hour early and brought a mate. The second bird was noticeably smaller, so it would be the male.

They were apparently driven away by the flock of evening grosbeaks. It often happens that small birds, defenceless individually, will gang up on a bird of prey and drive it off.

☆ ☆ ☆

It was on a March morning a year later that we stood at the window watching the birds coming and going between the trees and the feed tables. There were the usual house sparrows and starlings, and a blue jay. Earlier there had been a tree sparrow but he had gone. Then we saw in a birch on the other side of the fence a dark bird that might in the poor light and drizzle have been another blue jay.

In a moment we knew it was not, for it shot out of the trees, flew fast straight towards us, and crashed into the glass of the window. It cannoned off, having apparently half-turned before it struck, and slanted down to the snow fifteen yards away. There it stayed motionless for a minute, and we saw that it was a sharp-shinned hawk.

The hawk sat there, upright, and we wondered if it was badly hurt or dying after the collision with the window, and I was just going to get a raincoat and thick gloves to investigate when it began to move again. It may have stunned itself, but not for long. Then we saw that it had killed a sparrow, which it quickly tore in pieces and ate.

The hawk's foray across the garden had been so sudden and fast that we had never seen it strike its prey. When I went out a couple of minutes later, the sharp-shin was perfectly well able to fly, and made off to some trees a hundred yards away. On the snow nothing was left but half a dozen small feathers and a little scarlet stain.



Goldeneye Duck (female)

APRIL

Robins in Flocks

Up to an early April weekend there had been a few reports of robins, one seen here, another by someone else there. My wife and I had not seen a single one.

Then on the Saturday morning, after an hour or two in which the gardens around were occupied by grackles, starlings and house sparrows, suddenly the word was: "There's a robin! Two robins! Five robins!" Five it was, a little company hunting on our neighbour's grass. Later in the morning they flew away and we did not see them again. On an afternoon drive to Jenseg we saw only one robin, in a Sheffield pasture.

Sunday was what might be called the annual "day of the robins". In seven different fields within a radius of twenty miles from home, we saw robins in flocks, fifteen to twenty of the red-breasted birds at a time. When you see more than a hundred robins in a couple of hours, their spring invasion is definitely on.

Down river on Saturday it was evident that other species were arriving in force. We had seen one little company of red-winged blackbirds a couple of weeks earlier, an advance guard of the "officer birds" perhaps. Now there were several flocks of a hundred or a hundred and fifty in each, feeding on the river bank, suddenly flying up in dense, almost wing-to-wing formation, only to go down all together just as abruptly to resume their foraging.

By a stretch of open water at Maugerville there were gulls, fourteen of the great black-backed and five or six herring gulls. Back home we found a song sparrow, our first for the year, in our garden.

Birds of a Feather

In early April the old proverb seems to apply particularly to the tribe of "blackbirds". The grackles, redwings, rusty blackbirds, starlings and cowbirds associate in mixed groups of constantly shifting composition.

In our own garden lately the biggest gang in the visiting flocks has been that of the cowbirds. Sometimes thirty or forty arrive, sometimes more, once as many as a hundred and forty. That might be rather overpowering for a suburban backyard, even though it is still entirely covered with snow, but the birds usually move off in an abrupt flight after quarter or half an hour. Usually a few starlings, from three or four to a dozen, are with them, and several times last week, though not every day, there were grackles in about the same numbers as the starlings.

Redwings turned up twice, the first time fifteen or twenty, then after an interval of five days, a couple.

One day the cowbirds were joined for a few minutes by a single rusty blackbird.

Beginners with birds should easily learn to distinguish these species. The starling is thickset, with a stubby tail, and in spring the male's spike of a bill is yellow. The grackle is long-tailed, rather bigger than a robin, and the tail looks as if it had been made by a boy cutting out black paper to fashion a dart with a crease down the middle.

The others are in between for size and medium length of tail. Male redwings are the birds with yellow-edged scarlet shoulder patches, of which sometimes only the yellow part shows. Male cowbirds have heads of rich brown on otherwise all-black bodies. The rusty blackbird is plain black, though green reflections may give its head a metallic sheen, and it has a rather conspicuous pale yellow eye.

There is such a thing as a yellow-headed blackbird, too; but it is only a casual visitor to this province.

Birds Returning

In spite of late snowstorms and generally unpleasant weather, early April is a time of year that's exciting to those who like to see the various birds as they appear for another season. Whenever there is a day fit to go on a drive or walk, one can count on finding some to list as "first this year".

A typical weekend we noted several. Near Sheffield a beautiful marsh hawk was searching the edge of a wood. He was a male, gray with the "dipped in ink" wing tips and the conspicuous white rump. He flew slowly along the field for two or three hundred yards, then wheeled and went back over the same ground.

After a time the hawk went off through a gap in the trees and as we turned away we became aware of movement down among the bushes in the water at the foot of the river bank.

It was a great blue heron. It flew off too, the beat of the big wings exhibiting as always a strange combination of lightness and power. For so large a bird this heron moves with impressive easy grace.

Farther down river there were Canada geese. We had seen these the week before. This time there were not so many, but they put on a three-ring circus of their own. At one moment we were able to watch a score flying, quite low, in the familiar V formation, while directly beneath there were some grazing in the field, and behind them forty or fifty swam in a backwater.

Across the river, on the Oromocto Flats, there was a meadowlark in the middle of a field. Among the bushes a tree sparrow foraged busily.

We saw other bird-watchers, too, who told us of a fox sparrow and a baldpate duck, but we could not find those.

A few more days and it will be time to look for swallows. Maybe "one swallowe proueth not that summer is neare", as the old proverb has it, but at least it is a strong help to believing that summer is approaching.

Spring Weekend Bird Watching

One detail of bird behaviour we have definitely established lately is that cowbirds appreciate the mixture of seeds for wildbird feeding sold packaged in the stores. At the end of the late snow, we put up a dispenser of such seed, and it attracted house sparrows, starlings, a grackle or two, juncos and cowbirds. The juncos mostly picked up seed scattered on the ground beneath. Most of the species stopped coming when the weather improved, but a couple of male cowbirds have shown their glossy black with the bright brown head daily ever since. They are apt to stay half an hour for a leisurely and ample feast.

In country drives during the long weekend we noted a number of sparrow hawks; male ring-necked pheasants in two places, twenty miles apart; flickers; ring-billed gulls; many goldeneyes and black ducks; a wood duck, and a pair (male and female in their differing but equally beautiful plumage) of American (or common) mergansers.

Current check-lists from the New Brunswick Museum give that name as "Common Merganser". In Peterson it is "American Merganser or Goosander". Goosander is the name used for the bird in Britain. Both this one and the red-breasted merganser are listed in the European books. There is also a merganser which has a winter range including parts of England that goes by the name of "snew". Name changes effected by the professional ornithologists are not always illuminating. The "Common" merganser is classified for New Brunswick as "uncommon".

The noisiest birds in our countryside at present are undoubtedly the redwings. A flock of two or three hundred of them by the river can make a wonderful clamour.

Sapsucker's Drum

On a late April day my wife and I saw a yellow-bellied sapsucker, our first for the year's notes. He was on a tree at the foot of the hill in the Odell Park, pecking busily at the bark, a male with vividly red cap and throat as well as the lengthwise white streak on the wing that distinguishes this species from other woodpeckers with patterns of black and white.

Soon he flew off. Then from a little distance away we heard a most tremendous drumming, a real uproar. Walking up to look for the hammerer, we found the sapsucker again, this time on a powerline pole. He was near the top, just below a band of tin fixed round the wood, evidently to prevent chafing by a wire stay attached at that point.

The bird hammered at his tin drum again. Then he paused and looked at it motionless, for half a minute. Half a dozen gentler taps followed, producing a lighter, less resounding tone. The sapsucker stepped down a few inches and looked upward at his tin plate, in silent concentration, it seemed. Then he moved back up the post and tried three more tattoos, medium strength, then a softer one, finally another long, loud drum roll. After that he flew away into the wood.

It was easy to imagine that the bird was interested in the percussion instrument he was playing, but I suppose he was just experimenting with different angles of attack on a piece of what must have seemed annoyingly tough bark. Or maybe the drum solo is a mating call.

A few days before the sapsucker's appearance we had seen a brown creeper near the same spot. Sunday there were several flickers in evidence. The flicker's "song", say the books, is "a loud wick-wick-wick-wick". There may be fifteen or twenty "wicks" in fast succession from a flicker on a treetop, and loud is the right adjective. The robin seems to object to it. At least, while we were watching two

flickers, a party of five or six robins joined forces to chivvy them away, first from one tree, then another, until they withdrew a couple of hundred yards. Then the robins returned to their hunt for worms on the ground.

On a day at the end of one April I watched an osprey taking a bath in a side-channel of the river. It surprised me, though I suppose it shouldn't have done, for practically all birds do it from time to time, but I had never seen one of these big fish-hawks at it before.

An osprey lives by water always, of course, and perhaps in my mind there was a half-thought that it would get all



Osprey

the splashing it wanted in its dives for fish. That is always a dramatic thing to watch, the way an osprey hovers high in the air over lake, river or sea, then suddenly plummets down in a spectacular dive, making a great splash into the water and emerging a moment later with a fish firmly gripped in its talons.

It's such a big hawk, too, with a length of as much as two feet and a wingspread sometimes extending to six feet, and a striking pattern of dark-brown above and white below, but showing a black wrist mark on the underside of the wings.

This particular osprey that I watched had waded into shallow water from the bank until it stood submerged about

hip-deep, if that description may be applied to a bird. And there for four or five minutes it splashed and beat water over itself with its wings, making a very thorough job of its bath.

Snipe Behaviour

The same day I had very good views, several times, of snipe overhead making their peculiar winnowing noise, as it is called. That is a very strange sound, and in my experience it is heard in spring a hundred times for once that the bird is seen. It's a high-pitched quavery note, not seeming very loud yet so resonant that it may be heard a mile away from the bird making it. It has been described as a hollow tremolo oo-oo-oo-oo-oo, and there has been much argument and theorizing about the exact manner of its production. Earl Godfrey, in the new *Birds of Canada* book, says: "The sound is produced in flight by the rush of air past the spread tail feathers, and the tremolo effect by the rapidly beating wings."

Generally the snipe is away up in clouds when you hear it, and impossible to find, but these birds down near Jemseg happened to perform at no great height, and I was lucky to pick them up in the binoculars and watch. Robie Tufts has a good description of the snipe's behaviour in his *Birds of Nova Scotia*. He says: "the sound described begins at the precise moment the bird starts its downward swoop and ends at the exact moment it suddenly swerves upward. When the slanting downward course begins, the wing motion suddenly changes from one of normal action to that of a pulsating, fluttering movement. This abruptly ends when the bird starts to rise to regain its former flight level." The birds I watched conformed precisely with that description by Mr. Tufts. It's a courtship performance. I wonder if the snipe enjoys the sound it makes.

That same day down river there were ducks in variety but not in any great numbers. They seem to be rather late in building up their flocks this year. There were some scaup ducks, the first I had seen this spring, and a couple of blue-winged teal also made an addition to my notebook

list. They were in a little pool hardly ten yards from the road that I came upon just on rounding a bend. They got up immediately and flew off, and I could admire once more in a close-up view the astonishingly beautiful light blue of the wing-patch.

There were herring gulls and great black-backed gulls, and cormorants. It was near the Gagetown ferry that I saw the cormorants, fifteen or twenty of them altogether, in two groups standing very close together with wings half extended.

Supposedly this spread-wing pose is necessary for drying out their plumage, but it seems a strange thing that so thoroughly aquatic a bird should not have developed feathering as fully adapted for living and hunting in water as the ducks and gulls. It was Taverner who described in his *Birds of Canada* this drying procedure in the words: "There, with wings hanging flaccidly, and a general air of dejection, they drape themselves with all the grace of a wet rag."

Cormorants will be seen along the St. John River in ones and twos all summer, but so far as my observation goes it is only for two or three weeks in spring that a flock of a dozen or a score in close formation may be found swimming busily along together.

Another thing I counted luck that afternoon was seeing a couple of little water-thrushes near the river bank, for a year ago I had seen some on what made a new early date for this area, and here they were again on precisely the same 30th of April. An oddity the water-thrush, for though it looks like a miniature thrush with just the variation of streaks instead of spots on the breast, it is actually a wood warbler. It finds its food mostly on the ground, instead of on trees and bushes, and does like the sort of habitat that has plenty of water or marsh. The two I watched were actually walking — and their movement is walking, not hopping — on floating trash. A kind of mat forms among bushes on the river bank when the water rises at this season, grasses and broken twigs and leaves floating. It looks to have no more supporting strength than a piece of tissue paper on a water surface, but it is enough for the slight weight of a five-inch warbler.

Roads by the River

This is a season when there is so much to see along the river.

A late April weekend certainly provided contrast in the general scene. On Saturday as we drove by Mouth of Keswick to Bear Island and back, the sun was shining and the air warm, but the river was full of ice. Most of the afternoon the run of close-packed ice in the fast moving water was quite spectacular. Then on Sunday, with only a drifting slab of ice here and there, it was overcast and cold, with a wind that seemed to be coming straight down from polar regions.

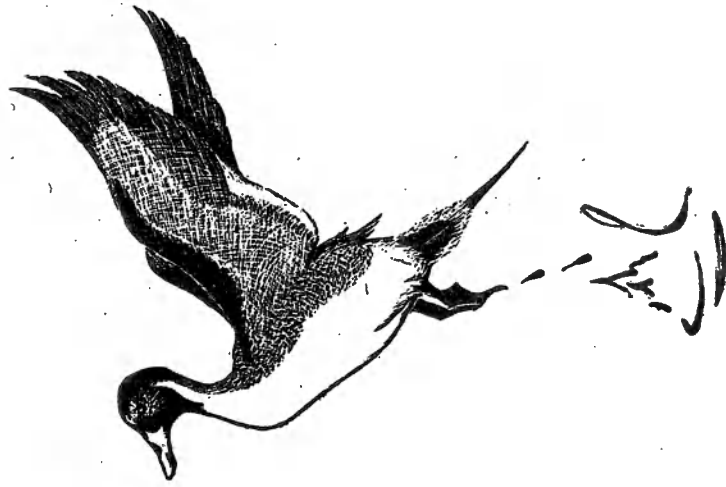
For us it was a wonderful weekend of spring bird-life.

Some swallows seem to have arrived early this year. In *The Birds of New Brunswick* the note on barn swallows is "spring flight usually arrives early in May" and "on the purple martin "seldom appears before the first of May," but we saw both April 27. Tree swallows are here too.

On both Saturday and Sunday we were delighted by the waterfowl. Twice we saw loons, a single one and then a group of three, swimming close to the river bank as though to offer us perfect opportunity to observe them. The same applied to a number of ducks. There was one female bufflehead, not an uncommon bird apparently, but new on our list. In four different places we saw pairs of red-breasted mergansers, very bright in the complicated pattern of plumage that distinguishes them.

The most exciting observation of the two days was a pair of hooded mergansers. This bird is described in the New Brunswick book as "very rare summer resident" and it was the first time we had seen one. The male is a strange-looking fish-duck, for the crest has a sort of fan shape that makes a smooth outline round to the back of the neck, giving the bird an appearance of having a very big head with a great patch of white on the side and a black edge behind it. Its sides are dark, breast white with two black bars in front of the wing, and the wing has a white patch.

There were, of course, black ducks and goldeneyes here and there — and once high overhead three geese flew by.



Pintail Duck

MAY

Ducks in Variety

For the sportsman the duck season is in the fall, when hunting is permitted, but for me as a bird-watcher the duck season is in April and May, when a considerable variety of ducks may be observed in local waters. Many of them just pause here on their migration to areas farther north, others breed in our province but are not so readily seen later.

For people who can't walk long distances from their cars, the best way to see ducks is to drive slowly down the Trans-Canada highway through Sheffield, watching the river and the backwaters and the freshet lakes in the fields all the way, and then add another bit of duck territory by taking the road to the Gagetown ferry, where the level road has the river on one side and Foshay Lake on the other.

In the first half of May, I noted one spring, I was able to observe fifteen species of ducks . . . and all ducks on the water are beautiful. There have been black duck and mallard, pintail, green-winged and blue-winged teal, American widgeon or baldpate, wood duck, ring-necked duck, greater and lesser scaup, common goldeneye, white-winged and common scoter, common and hooded merganser.

This has been the time of biggest numbers and variety, but another couple of weekends should still be good, and I know that there are some more kinds about, shovellers for instance, that I might see yet.

After that there won't be any more, and that road gets too oppressive with the roar of the tourist and commercial traffic it was built for, and the time will come to be grateful for all the quiet interest it has afforded, and then leave it in favour of the less frequented side roads through the summer.

Among all these ducks I think the most gorgeous in their colourful plumage patterns are the blue-winged teal, the baldpate, the wood duck, the common and hooded mergansers and the pintail. Of these, the wood duck will take any prize offered for fantastic design, and the pintail is easily the most graceful in form.

You have to start looking early in the migrating period for the green-winged teal, for those little ducks are among the first to arrive and they soon vanish again. A few are known to nest in the Maugerville-Sheffield area, but they seem to me to keep out of sight with great success.

For baldpates and hooded mergansers you need luck, for while the black, goldeneye, scaup and ring-necked ducks are to be found in hundreds any day you like to go and look, and the pintails and blue-winged teals by the dozen, it is highly unusual to find either baldpate or hooded merganser

in more than one location on a trip and only one or two at a time. Even at that you won't see either of them every day you are out looking for ducks, nor even every spring.

There have been the Canada geese too. Mostly in the spring season you find the flocks here and there within a three-mile circle centred on the Jemseg bridge, or somewhere behind the farm beside the Gagetown ferry. When I was down that way on the 14th, there was still a flock of over two hundred in that last favourite stretch of pasture and lake waters.

While the geese and ducks will provide the main entertainment through these spring weeks, many other interesting birds will be seen, and whenever something is once more noted for the first time in the year that will provide extra pleasure.

During that weekend with the great river high and rolling rapidly, there were greater yellowlegs wading and probing the mud at the edges of many of the temporary lakes, and I saw a couple of solitary sandpipers too.

Once a magnificent bald eagle flew past, close to the road and hardly more than fifty feet up, a splendid sight with its striking pattern of dark body and wings contrasting with the pure white head and tail.

In some bushes by the roadside at one point where I stopped for what I thought at first glance would be a song sparrow, it turned out to be a vesper sparrow, conspicuous when it flew out with a flash of white outer tail feathers. There was a savannah sparrow not far away.

That weekend I saw also for the first time this year several black terns. It is an odd thing that although this tern is abundant in central Canada and the prairies, it is extremely rare in the Maritimes. Mostly it is just a casual visitant in these provinces, but in this part of New Brunswick bird-watchers can count on seeing the species every summer, for the single small breeding colony known to exist in the Atlantic provinces is in Sunbury county, and the birds can regularly be seen flying up and down over ponds observable from the road between McGowan's Corner and Jemseg.

The black tern has a strange beauty of its own, I think. It has the typical tern shape and graceful movement that gave the ordinary kind the name of sea swallow, but it has a black body, except for a bit of white under the base of the tail, and its back and upper surfaces of the wings are a medium slate-grey. Not colourful, but the black and grey make a dramatic pattern of contrast as it wheels and swerves in swift to-and-fro flight over water.

The black tern feeds on grasshoppers, dragonflies, beetles, flies, moths and other insects, most of which it catches swallow-fashion on the wing. It winters on the coasts of tropical seas from Panama to Peru and Surinam.

Snowy Owl in the City

The owl was observed first by someone who happened to glance out of a third-story window in the N.B. Electric Power Commission's building on King Street, one morning in May, 1965. The bird was on the tower of Wilmot United Church on Carleton Street, perched on the ledge where the spire has its base on the top of the square portion.

"A large white owl," I was informed, and that is what I saw when I was able to look at it an hour later. It was visible from the sidewalk on King Street. It stayed for more than two hours and finally flew away into the wind a few minutes before one o'clock.

It was a snowy owl, evidently on migration back towards the Arctic after wintering somewhere to the south.

The snowy owl, which is a large bird, 20 to 26 inches in length, is a day-flying species that lives mostly in the northern regions. It migrates south irregularly, appearing in considerable numbers every four years.

This is explained by Peters and Burleigh in the Newfoundland bird book as follows: "These large 'White Owls' are forced south in great numbers when the lemmings, their favourite food, become scarce in the northern, barren country. The lemming appears to have a four-year cycle of abundance; so the owls are regarded as cyclic also."

Last fall was one of the four-year seasons, and a number of snowy owls were reported sighted in New Brunswick. Early May seems to be the time for such immigrants to travel north again.

On the habits of the snowy owl, Peters and Burleigh have this to say: "Its flight is strong, steady and direct, but not very rapid. It is usually very wary and perches upon a high point of land, rock, tree or building so it can survey the surroundings in all directions, turning its head from side to side, always on the alert. It flies and feeds mostly in the daytime. In its Arctic home the main food supply is the lemming and Arctic hare, but it will eat many kinds of mammals and birds and will even remove animals from traps."

One day in the middle of May we left the river and we tried a different type of countryside by going up the Royal Road, then by gravel roads to Woodland and over to Taymouth, returning by the Nashwaak valley.

That way we found evening grosbeaks in scattered pairs, and sapsuckers. A slate-coloured junco flashed his white tail feathers at the edge of a wood, and once we sat in the stopped car for five minutes watching at a range of three or four yards a group of small birds on the ground. There were a pair of evening grosbeaks and a female purple finch.

Half a mile farther on, the most spectacular bird of the day rose from the grass forty yards away and began to climb in leisurely circles. It was a magnificent red-tailed hawk. For minutes it soared above us before it finally vanished behind tall trees on some higher ground.

It was an unusually good opportunity to observe the appearance of this big hawk — it averages about two feet in body length — as it rose near to and facing away from us. "Upper parts mostly brown or grayish-brown, often with some reddish-brown about head and neck. Tail chestnut above with narrow black band near tip."

Near Taymouth we saw a woodcock perched on a telephone wire. The woodcock is surely one of the oddest looking birds with its "neckless", almost square shape and that disproportionately long bill.

For a bird-watcher it's a pleasant spring weekend when he sees forty different species and a dozen of them are "first time this year" items for his notebook.

Cormorants in the River

For those who must do most of their bird-watching from a car, or not walking more than a few yards from it, the river bank by the Trans-Canada Highway all through Maugerville and Sheffield is rewarding territory just now. At the weekend there were myrtle warblers and Nashville warblers in the bushes, and swallows skimming over the water. A number of greater yellowlegs hunted busily in the shallows and by the time we reached the old Congregational Church we had seen eight different kinds of ducks.

Then we saw a cormorant, a little farther out in open water with what appeared to be a thick eel held in its beak by one end and twisting about. The cormorant dived under the surface repeatedly, fifteen or twenty times while we watched. Just how the eel was damaged in the process I do not know, but at the last emergence the prey was limp and its captor proceeded to swallow it whole.

We had hardly moved on fifty yards when we saw more cormorants in a group, so we stopped to count them. There were nineteen. It was the first time we had ever come upon a fishing flock of cormorants in the St. John River, though the sight is common enough on the coast.

Killer in the Open

Another successful predator that we watched, four-footed and on the ground this time, was a short-tailed weasel. We had stopped to look at a duck when my wife noticed that on her side of the car, hardly three feet away on the stones edging the bank, there was activity of a different kind. We had evidently interrupted a kill, for on the stones a light-coloured mouse was kicking helplessly, a larger and darker mouse was scuttling away, and between them the brown and white weasel moved swiftly, running up from below on to the top of the stone heap and back out of sight.

In a moment the mouse was dead, but the weasel hesitated about retrieving it. Several times the brown head came up over the edge and beady eyes looked at us before finally the animal must have decided that this obstruction was not going to move and could be ignored. Then it rushed across the stones, picked up its mouse and promptly vanished with it down the bank.

Birds Common and Uncommon

The duck we had been observing when the weasel interrupted was a shoveller, rated as rare in New Brunswick. It was a beautiful bird, a male with the dark head, big shovel bill, white breast and most of back, sides of rich rufous-red.



Shoveller

In the same general area we noted several other birds for the first time this season. A loon was swimming and diving with a quarter-mile of river all to itself. A common tern flew overhead, and there were three or four black terns wheeling low over a long backwater or side channel.

When we stopped to look at some birds in a field, mostly redwings and grackles, we found near them two bobolinks, and from a distance came the tinkling song of another one.

A grey-cheek was the first thrush other than the multicoloured robins, and while we were watching him a red-shouldered hawk soared over our heads, perched for a few seconds on a high tree and then flew away in the direction of Grand Lake.

The tree swallows, barn swallows and martins are numerous now, and at Jenseg bridge we found cliff swallows. The mud nests are to be seen plastered in corners of the concrete beams under the bridge if you go down the old road and look up. So far we have not seen any bank swallows to complete the set, but dates in our notebook for these vary from 14 to 22 May.

Spring Colours

In the fall the colours of the woods are more spectacular, of course, with their reds and golds, but at this time of year there is amazing beauty of delicate shades. Over the weekend birch and poplar were dressed in pale-green gauze of opening, fresh leaves, and there were pastel colours of tree flowers to delight the eye.

It is interesting to see light colours on a grand scale. From high spots on the road through Millville, for instance, there are wonderful vistas of broad hills covered with forest. At the weekend there were mile-wide stretches of faint gray-pink, with here and there a pattern of cross hatching pencilled in by evergreens. There is a great deal of maple, I am told, in that area, and its flowering presumably would be the source of the delicate tint of distant pink.

The New Brunswick Museum, according to its "Nature News", is interested in dates of first observation of wild flowers each spring, and would welcome more correspondents. In the Odell Wood the first flowers seem always to be the yellow dogtooth violet, or adder's-tongue, which we saw this year May 5.

Snipe on an Insulator

Everyone's spring bird-list must be lengthening rapidly. In various places over the weekend we saw barn swallows and purple martins, and once a cliff swallow, but we have not found yet any of the bank swallows that burrow their holes in the top of vertical banks of sand. There were many martins at the houses put up for them near "Island View";

it must be a great joy to the owners that the birds are so faithful.

The chipping sparrows are back. They seem always to have such a "neatly dressed" look about them with their plain gray breast, stripes over the eyes and bright chestnut cap.

In a multitude of feathered population down on the Oromocto Flats, two individual birds stood out. You can stop a car at any point along that deserted, dead-end road and just sit, with good prospect of seeing half a dozen species at close quarters in five minutes. One of our "specials" was a white-throated sparrow that alighted on a twig alongside, about five feet from the open car window, and watched us for a couple of minutes. It is at such close range that one appreciates how very white is that white throat, and how vivid are the head stripes in their black and white, how brilliant is the yellow that fills the front portion of the light stripe over the eye.

The other unusual individual was a snipe. It arrived as we sat watching things and took up position on a glass insulator on the cross-bar of a telephone pole. There it opened its fantastic long bill slightly, and said "ka-ka-ka-ka". Now, in various books we had read of the common snipe uttering a harsh "scaipe" in flight, and also of its habit of making a "winnowing" note by vibration of the edges of tail and wing feathers against the air, as a mating performance. This snipe's announcement was neither of those things. It repeated the call several times and finally its mate flew up in a great hurry, apparently, and the two at once made off together.

Later I found a description of this behaviour in just one of the books on our shelves. This was the Peters and Burleigh *Birds of Newfoundland*. (It's a perennial source of amazement to me that our economically poorest province has been able to produce by government enterprise so magnificent a book!) There I read: "When on the ground it crouches or huddles on the grassy vegetation so is not often seen until flushed at close range. It often alights upon a post or tree to give its scolding 'ka-ka-ka-ka'."

Also on Sunday a gentle song of "chee-will, chee-willy, chee-willy" announced the return of the solitary, or blue-headed, vireo, but we could not get sight of it.

A Boss Bird

Saturday with its rain early and intermittent drizzle afterwards did not seem good for looking at birds in the woods, so we stayed home. In the afternoon a break in the clouds served as a reminder that there was some work waiting in the garden, and I went out to clip an edge of grass and weed out some dandelions.

The gardening turned out a slow job, because it was necessary after every two minutes with shears or hoe to stop for ten to look at birds!

In the course of an hour there turned up in our neighbour's garden and ours seven different species of warblers, two hummingbirds, several chipping sparrows, and a least flycatcher. Three of the warblers, as well as the hummingbirds, were additions to our 1961 bird list. These were a parula warbler, a redstart and a black-throated blue warbler. The others were a Blackburnian, some myrtles, a yellow warbler and a Cape May.

In the middle of his garden our neighbour Mr. Alex D'Amour had half a dozen small gooseberry bushes. The Cape May warbler seemed to be determined to have these as a private empire of his own. On the other hand, for some time one hummingbird was equally resolute that gooseberry flowers were put into the world to provide it with food.

The struggle went on for a long time. The hummingbird would flash down to a bush, making quick darts as it hung on speed-blurred wings at first one flower and then another. Always before it could thrust its long, needle bill into a third, the warbler came swirling round it, swooping at it until the harassed hummer would retreat to a near-by tree.

Mr. D'Amour watched with interest too. "He's the boss," he said, indicating the Cape May warbler. "He won't allow anything else around his bushes. He's the boss all right!"

The Cape May was indeed the boss, but as the winged manoeuvres went on for at least an hour it is probable that in the repeated efforts, snatching a sip here and a sip there, the hummingbird may have succeeded in getting a feed. It made a colourful small-scale spectacle, for the hummingbird was bright in its iridescent green with glowing red throat, while the Cape May warbler has a picturesque pattern of dark back, bright yellow breast with black tiger stripes, yellow round the neck and chestnut cheeks.

The Cape May continued, like a miniature feathered tiger, to be boss of the bushes all through the next day too.

Watchful Ground-Hog

All wild animals can "freeze" into wary immobility, I suppose, but I don't know any that could achieve a greater stillness than a ground-hog that I saw one evening this week.

He was on a woodland path, apparently browsing, but abandoned what he was doing to watch for a minute as my wife and I approached. When we were within ten yards he suddenly scuttled off to one side, to an observation post by a rock at the foot of a tree trunk. His hole was there, as a matter of fact, but he did not enter it. Instead, he sat bolt upright, as the habit of woodchucks is, to see over the barrier of stones and roots between us.

There he watched in the most utter stillness. There was not the slightest flicker of movement even in his eye, which all the same looked most brightly and intensely alive.

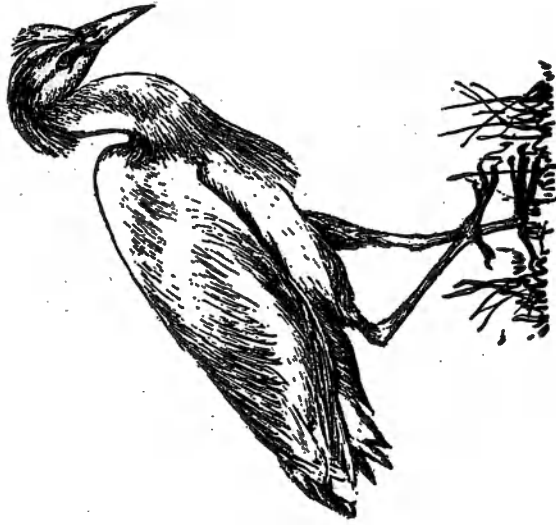
The ground-hog watched me walk slowly towards him until I was within six feet. Then he must have decided that there are limits even for a creature like himself naturally interested in any other animals about. He vanished in a quick dive into his hole.

Hummingbird and Bobolinks

Nothing produces a more sudden delight than the first sight each spring of a hummingbird. You don't see or hear him approach, he is just unexpectedly there, at some blossom overhead, and with an excited "Look, look, there's a hummingbird!" you watch again his miracle of flight as he darts up, sideways, on a slant down, and again forward.

There was one last Saturday in the Odell Wood. Below him in the bushes was a yellow-throat, also the first we had seen this year. There were yellow warblers, too, not just one or two but at least a dozen scattered through the bushes within a hundred yards. A rose-breasted grosbeak showed briefly.

Among the larches near the University the following day we added the baybreasted warbler to the season's list. Farther up the hill there was a sudden outburst of a "bubbling, reedy song" as one book puts it — "glass handbells" in my wife's description — and out over a thicket came bobolinks.



Cattle Egret

JUNE

Bird-Watching Adventure

You need a little luck to have exciting experiences in watching birds, at least that's the way my wife and I always found it. One Saturday was a lucky day.

To begin with, we had thought of going up-river, but as we left the house my wife said: "Maybe we'd do better with birds down river today." That was her first inspired remark of the afternoon. We were having a pleasant drive and had seen many birds, including a Canada warbler at close range, the one with the heavily marked black "necklace" on its bright yellow breast. In spite of its name as "Canada", it's classified as "uncommon" here. Then my wife noticed a strange-looking old tree and I stopped the car so that we could have a better look at it. Second inspiration in one afternoon!

For beyond the tree and across a field there were some old stumps beside a small stretch of water, and a white object was visible close to one of these stumps. It moved and I directed binoculars to it. So did my wife.

It proved to be a small heron and it was pure white except for some beautiful buffish colouring on the top of the head, back and breast. We were looking at a cattle egret!

It was just over a year since the first of these cattle egrets were seen in New Brunswick, in Charlotte County, and one of the small flock was shot on a farm. That one is now a specimen in the New Brunswick Museum.

This spring one or two more have been seen, on Grand Manan I think. This bird in the Sheffield area was certainly the first cattle egret observed in central New Brunswick.

The story of the spread of these birds is an astonishing one. The cattle egret is an Old World bird, belonging to Africa and India, with colonies in Spain and Portugal on the European side of the Mediterranean. About thirty years ago, a flock suddenly turned up in British Guiana. It is only ten years since the species was first recorded in North America.

In the decade since then, there has been a "population explosion" of cattle egrets through the United States and year by year they have spread north and east. This spring they are said to be well established in Maine.

So we stood entranced and watched the leisurely movements of "our" cattle egret. It walked a few yards, then turned round and went back to its tree-stump. After standing a few minutes with head hunched into its shoulders, it moved again and went half-way up the stump, then down again. It was on that move that we could see clearly the heron silhouette of the bird and note its light-coloured legs.

After a time we drove off to look for a telephone. The first call was successful in getting Mr. Melvin Moore, who drove right out while we went back to the egret field and waited for him. When he had confirmed the identification, and he and Mrs. Moore had watched it for minutes, we all crawled under a fence wire and went a bit nearer. This shortly disturbed the bird, but not very much. It flew to a

perch in the top branches of a dead tree just the other side of the water, hardly fifty yards away. There it had the company of a crow on another branch, and they provided a study in black and white.

An hour later I was able to notify Dr. Austin Squires and he too hurried to Sheffield, where he found the cattle egret still in the same locality, but maybe a couple of hundred yards farther down at the edge of a marsh.

For all of us it was a first time of seeing this species alive—and up to that time it had only been recorded three or four times in Canada. A real bird-watching thrill.

Colourful Warblers

After one very slow, cold spring, I wrote at the beginning of June: In spite of the continuing cold, wet weather that persisted right to the bitter end of May, the warblers moved in, and these brightly coloured, active little birds are always a joy to behold. They also provide excellent recognition exercise for the amateur bird-watcher.

There are so many species in the family, to begin with. The wood warblers belong exclusively to the Western Hemisphere, but there are 57 species in the North American list, and of those, 47 are known in Canada.

Why they should have been called warblers is a mystery, for as Earl Godfrey puts it in *The Birds of Canada*, "they do not warble. Many of the songs are not particularly musical, but they are energetic, pleasing, and distinctive enough to be useful aids in identification." Well, aids to identification are just what the bird-watcher needs. Warbler males and females in breeding plumage are often different, and in the fall they may wear another garb altogether, and some of the young birds exhibit still another variation. They are also extremely active, quick-moving little birds, many of them with a preference for hunting insect food high in tree tops, and that doesn't make them any easier to recognize and identify, either.

In the New Brunswick Museum's check-list of our birds, 22 species of wood warblers are noted as breeding in the province. So far this season I have seen just eight of these, alive, and one more I found dead on a city sidewalk.

What a variety of pattern and colour they present. The myrtle warbler is grey-blue above, white below, with an inverted black U on the breast and sides and vivid yellow patches on the crown of the head, in front of each wing, and on the rump. The magnolia warbler — I'm talking of the male bird in all of these descriptions — is dark on the upper parts but with prominent white patches on wings and tail, its under-parts all bright yellow with heavy black streaks. The Cape May is another with most of its underside including throat and face yellow with streaks of black, but with a distinctive chestnut patch on the side of the face. The yellow warbler is well named, for it is all yellow in various shades, with chestnut-red streaks on the breast. The Blackburnian is often called the "fire-throat", for with a general pattern of black-and-white it has vivid, flaming orange about the throat and head. That's just a few of the warblers, many of them very similar so that you have to look closely and keep your bird book handy to name them.

Gulls and Terns

Down river in the past couple of weeks the variety of what we usually think of as seabirds has been increasing. In addition to numerous herring gulls and great black-backed gulls, there has been a group of a score of Bonaparte's gulls. That's an interesting bird that you don't see very often. It is a very small gull, with the typical gull pattern of white and grey, but with the conspicuous field marks of a long white triangle on the grey of the wing and in breeding plumage a black head.

The common terns have arrived, too. They are always beautiful, with their white main plumage, grey mantle and black cap and swallow-like forked tails. Their flight is so fast and graceful, dramatically interrupted every few minutes by a splashing dive into the water.

The black terns are more numerous this year. They have been in evidence over most of the pools and backwaters all the way from McGowan's Corner to the Lower Jenseg ferry, and several experienced observers have told me that they too have been struck by the increased numbers. Dr.

Squires has established the existence of a second breeding colony in the past two or three years, by another lake, but still in Sunbury county. As I mentioned before, we are lucky to be able to see them here, for this is the only area in the Maritimes where these attractive birds are known to nest.

Some familiar birds seem to have been delayed by the adverse weather conditions. So far I have seen no bank swallows, no hummingbirds, no nighthawks, no kingfishers, and only one kingbird. I have noted a scattering of bobolinks, and I heard of a large flock of them near the Nashwaak river.

Quadrupeds near the Road

The four-legged animals to be seen from the road-sides are fascinating to watch, too. It's a very good time to take young children for drives in the country, for any evening you are likely in an hour to see rabbits in five or seven different places, and what small boy or girl can fail to be delighted by the sight of a rabbit?

You can forward their education, of course, by telling them that our rabbit is really a hare, the snowshoe hare or varying hare, the last name given to it because it changes its fur colour so that it's brown in summer and white in winter. The youngsters will continue to call it a rabbit for all that, and so, I suspect, will the rest of us at any age.

There are the red squirrels and the grey ones about, and with luck a groundhog may be seen. Four times so far this spring I have seen one of these engaging animals in a field or bit of waste ground near the roadside. There is nothing, I think, that sits quite so bolt upright. More opportunity for educational stuff, for you can tell the children how this animal digs an extensive system of burrows, hibernates in winter, and is also known as the marmot or woodchuck, a member of the squirrel family. I don't know through how many centuries children have taken delight in the old query: How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck would chuck wood? It still never fails.

Close to the river bank or the edge of a pool in a marsh the occasional muskrat may be seen. This is an abundant animal, but somehow the sight of one always takes me by surprise. For instance, the other evening I was coming along the road near the Ranger School and had stopped to look for birds in the bushes or wading in the pools of water of the piece of marsh there, when movement almost at my feet caught my attention, and there was a muskrat swimming along hardly five feet away. He had in his mouth a bundle of rushes bigger than his head, so I suppose it would be material for his den or perhaps food for his mate.

A Shakespearean character asked what's in a name and considered that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Commercial characters in North America could enlighten him, for they know that muskrat fur is more valuable when it's called Hudson seal, and while muskrat meat is said to be quite palatable, those who have marketed it in the United States have been careful to put it on the menu as "marsh rabbit".

I prefer the quadrupeds alive. Maybe next week I may see a raccoon or a bear.

A Glossy Ibis at Lower Jemseg

To see rare species, bird-watchers need an amount of coincidence and good luck. The ordinary amateur like myself, that is. A professional, whole-time naturalist can devote hours, even days, to searching for something known to be within a given square mile or so, and probably locate it. The spare-time enthusiast who looks for birds on a country drive has to depend on the chance of the rare bird coming out of a corner of the woods, for example, just when he happens to be passing.

One June day I had a special piece of luck like that. In the afternoon Mr. Bruce Wright had told me in a telephone conversation that there was a glossy ibis near Gagetown, seen several times during the previous five or six days.

Now, the glossy ibis is a very rare bird, just an accidental or casual visitor in New Brunswick. There have been only

half a dozen sightings of the species in the province since the first time, which was in 1952.

When I got home it looked to be a fine sunny evening, so I thought it might be a good idea to go for a drive down to the Jemseg and Gagetown area, just in case.

The sunshine lasted almost to the Jemseg bridge, then it began to rain. I went on through Lower Jemseg to the ferry, though, driving very slowly and scanning the river banks and marshy flats as well as I could in the failing light. No ibis.

Over by the ferry and along the road through Gagetown and back again. No ibis. It was raining more heavily and the light very poor now, but I kept to a slow pace to look over the low-lying banks and fields. There were plenty of redwings and grackles about, and once a great blue heron flew past, about six feet above the water. No ibis.

Then it happened. I was just reaching the point where the road begins to go up hill a little coming back to Lower Jemseg, when I saw a bird flying towards me, out on my left a bit, over the channel of water and just above the tops of the bushes on the bank. I thought first: here's a duck. Then as it drew level and I could see its silhouette even in the poor light, my thought was suddenly: Why, that's the thing I'm looking for! I saw it well enough for a moment to be quite sure of the bird with its outstretched neck and long down-curved bill.

It was the sort of lucky coincidence that makes an exciting moment for the bird-watcher, a rare bird happening to fly along in the only half-minute of an evening that he is in the right spot to see it.

The weekend before that I had seen another rare bird by the luck of arrival at the right moment. It was a regular inhabitant of New Brunswick, but one not often seen: a red-shouldered hawk. It appeared over some roadside trees, perched on the bare top of one of them, and was instantly chivvied by three or four grackles. A grackle is only half the size of a red-shouldered hawk, but the dive-bomber swoops were effective, and after circling half a dozen times, afford-

ing me a splendid view, the big hawk gave up and flew away.

Picnic Guests

On an unfrequented side road we stopped by a big old pine and parked at the side to eat a sandwich lunch in the car. There was a stretch of grass about five yards wide between the road and a quantity of young pine trees mostly ten or twelve feet high. Immediately a Canada jay arrived.

Canada jay is the name we continue to call it by, though in the ornithological check-lists it has been changed to gray jay. In New Brunswick it's usually known as a gorbey.

We gave our visitor a bit of sandwich and it stayed for lunch. After a bite or two, it began to fly off with fair-sized pieces through the little pines, always quickly coming back for more. Five minutes later it was joined by its mate, and both carried on the routine of two or three bites and then a bearing away of a piece no doubt quickly passed to young in a nest.

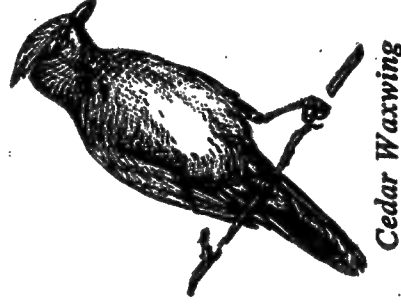
For a change from sandwiches we threw out a two-inch piece of a banana. The birds were probably sampling tropical fruit for the first time; both of them had a peck or two, then left it in favour of another bit of sandwich.

Finally one of the jays decided to carry off the little chunk of banana. This proved complicated. It started off with the fruit in its beak, transferred it in mid-air to its claws and a second later dropped it. No doubt banana proved too soft and slippery for a good grip. The bird went down to retrieve it, and perhaps it would be easier to hold when coated with pine needles. We could not see with the jay flying away from us just how it was finally carrying it.

The next day, on another country road, at the lunch halt we were immediately joined by a blue jay, but after looking us over from three different bushes that bird decided not to stay.

Another bird demonstrated that sometimes the best concealment is to stand in full view! We had stopped to look hopefully in the reeds and cat-tails of a little swampy hollow where one summer we had seen a family of Virginia rails. There were a number of redwings but no other birds

visible. Then something said hi-hi-hi-hi-hi-hi, somewhere quite close. We listened. The bird said it again, and the noise seemed to come from behind some small trees at the back of the marsh. We looked at every branch of every tree, I think, with no success. Every few minutes the bird repeated its hi-hi-hi-hi-hi-hi, seven or eight monotonous notes taking five or six seconds to utter. Finally I happened to glance up a little higher and farther than the bushes that seemed to be the location of the unseen caller, and then I noticed the line of wire crossing the fields. A snipe was perched on the very top of one of the telephone posts!



Cedar Waxwing

Cedar Waxwings

Except for a short period for nesting, these odd little birds seem to wander about in small flocks, irregularly, and the nesting time varies from early June to August.

A cedar waxwing is easily recognized, for it has several distinctive features. About seven or eight inches in length head to tail, its plumage is peculiarly smooth, sleek and silky in appearance. Most of it is a rich cinnamon brown, but the forehead, chin and a line through the eye are jet black, and the wings and tail ashy-blue. The tail is tipped with lemon yellow, and the secondaries of the wing often have end processes like small beads of red sealing wax. It is of course for this odd feature that the waxwings are named.

Many arrived in the Frederickton area during one June week. We saw one somewhere near Kingsley on the Sunday, and on Tuesday evening there were three or four in our own garden. That same day Mrs. Tucker telephoned to tell me about a flock of forty in her Springhill orchard.

That lot were feeding on petals of apple blossoms, which was something Mrs. Tucker had not observed before. I could not remember ever having seen birds eating blossoms on fruit trees, but this is apparently a regular habit of the waxwing. On turning up *The Birds of Nova Scotia*, by Robie Tufts, I found this note: "The items on its bill of fare range from small caterpillars to the petals of apple blossoms. In late summer much small fruit is devoured, such wild varieties as choke-cherries and blueberries being highly favoured. In some localities it is called 'Cherrybird' because of its liking for the cultivated fruit. But because of its relative scarcity it does no appreciable damage in this respect."

In the berry season, waxwings may be seen, on high-bush cranberries for instance, eating large berries and dribbling streams of juice down throat and breast.

Tufts describes the cedar waxwing's nest as "loosely constructed, of twigs, coarse grass, string, usnea moss . . . with lining of soft grass, often wool from a sheep, or bits of fur." My wife used to put out bits of string from the office of U.N.B.'s Alexander College, soft brown string used at the post office for tying bundles of letters. We have watched a waxwing lift a foot-long piece of string at the middle point, drop it carefully on the ground, lift again by the middle of the double six-inch length, and even drop it again "four-ply" to get a good hold by the middle of the resulting bundle of twine.

Orioles Make Remarkable Nest

A Saturday morning walk in the Odell Woods provided a number of interesting bird observations. There were a couple of evening grosbeaks, and as they have been in evidence for three weeks now it is possible they have decided

on nesting; grosbeak nests and young have been seen from time to time in the province. There was a little golden-crowned kinglet emphatically calling see-see-see. Blue jays, juncos, catbirds, nuthatches, redstarts were among the couple of dozen species seen. The most exciting addition to the "first time this year" list was a pair of Baltimore orioles.

We heard the oriole song first, a performance fully justifying Peterson's description of it as "a series of rich, piping whistled notes." It was near the railroad track, but for six or eight minutes we looked in vain for the singer. Then suddenly he shot out from the top of a small tree where dense growth of leaves had completely hidden him. His orange and black showed vivid against the green as he flew across to a neighbouring elm. It was the next tree to one in which a pair nested last year, so perhaps these were the same birds. The male joined his mate there, and we saw that a beginning had been made on the nest-weaving.

Taverner calls the nest of the Baltimore oriole "one of the avian curiosities. It is in the form of a bag woven of fibres, plant down, hairs, and string, and hangs from the end of long, drooping branches. With her sharp, awl-like bill the female thrusts a fibre into the side of the nest, then reaching over the inside pulls it through, tugging to make all tight and solid, another fibre is thrust in and the process is repeated until when complete the nest is so knitted, woven and felted together that though tossed at the end of long, flexible branch tips through summer and winter storms, it remains intact for several years."

One such nest on a tree in Rookwood Avenue, built mainly of post office string from packets of mail delivered to the office of Alexander College, stayed on the branch for three years. One thing we noticed on Saturday was that the male and female birds were apparently working together, facing each other and using their bills on opposite sides of the small piece so far woven.

Soon they flew off. An hour later we saw a pair of them in another part of the wood, but they may well have been the same birds.

Swallows Nesting

Lower St. Mary's is a good place to watch bank swallows at their nests. The big gravel pit there is one of the many places in the neighbourhood where these birds are to be seen annually.

They are the swallows that tunnel out their homes in the vertical face of sand-pits, usually in a stratum of three to six feet just below the topsoil and turf above. There was a flurry of activity about the sand wall, reminding one of the scene at a beehive in the height of the honey-gathering season. At any moment there must have been a hundred swallows hovering near and then darting into the holes. Looking at them with binoculars it was possible to make a rough count of holes. There must on that particular sand wall be something like four hundred!

Unlike a colony of insects, birds have individual homes and families. How does any one bank swallow tell the difference between her door and the other four hundred in the bank? For that matter how does any ground-nesting bird find its spot in a twenty-acre meadow of long grass?

The bank swallow on the wing, as swallows are mostly seen until the time comes to line up in flocks on telephone wires, is brown on the back, white beneath with a sharp brown band across the breast.

At another place we saw cliff swallows also concerned with nesting. These are colourful birds: steely black above except for a light tan rump; white or cream bar across the forehead; dull white below but with rich chestnut on lower face and throat, blending into breast and flanks. These swallows were extremely busy gathering gobs of wet mud from the sides of puddles by the road.

The building of nests by cliff swallows seems to have at least as much variety as dwellings in a suburban housing development. Here is a description from Taverner's *Birds of Canada*: "A typical nest is built entirely of mud carried in little pellets in the bill and on the feet. The mud is mixed with saliva and plastered pellet by pellet on the wall under the eaves of some building or on cliff faces. The nest is first a shelf built out from the wall, then saucer-shaped and then

cup-shaped, in any of which states it may be left as finished. In the best examples the sides are continued until the nest assumes the shape of a round flask with the neck drawn over and pointed outwards."

Barn swallows seem to prefer a ready-made support such as a beam or rafter on which to make a nest of mud mixed with grasses. Tree swallows and martins now are to be found mostly nesting in boxes provided by human agency.

Battling Small Birds

When we think of one bird attacking another, the first thing that comes to mind is a hawk swooping down to kill a sparrow or other prey. It is the predators that attack to kill, certainly, the big and powerful against something smaller and weaker. There is another form of combat, though, not to kill but simply to drive away, and it is normally between a smaller and weaker bird, or more often a pair of them or three or four, and something much bigger. This is the commoner struggle in the air. For every time we see a hawk or an owl attack, we can count a hundred battles to protect young in the nest, for that is the origin of the action.

Very often grackles may be observed driving off crows or ravens, noted raiders of nests for eggs or young birds. A couple of weeks ago I watched some grackles put to flight a red-shouldered hawk that had settled on a tree top evidently too near their nests.

Inevitably these exhibitions of harrying tactics by red-wings or starlings or grackles suggest pictures of air combat in war, small fighter planes against much bigger bombers. The small birds somehow manage to get above the aggressor, and then dive directly at it, often swerving off an inch from their enemy, sometimes bumping it, or stabbing with their beaks. They twist and turn, hurtling down in steep dives again and again in fast combat manoeuvres; and every time I've watched such a battle, the bigger bird has tired of it and made off, leaving the defenders to return triumphantly to their nests.

Once I saw one of these affairs that was a bit different. It presented the greatest contrast I had ever observed in the

sizes of the species engaged, two I had not watched in such a fight before: redwings against a great blue heron!

I don't know if the big herons eat small birds or eggs or not. They take small fish, frogs, snakes and other live prey, and no doubt would not leave newly hatched birds if they came upon them. The little redwings, three or four of them, evidently saw the heron as a danger to be driven away, and they did their best. This time the picture conjured up was not so much fighter plane against bomber, but rather an artist's drawing in the first world war of planes against a zeppelin.

The length of a redwing is about eight inches, of a great blue heron about four feet.

It struck me that the heron was utterly indifferent to the diving and swerving redwings. It did not vary its straight-line, level flight six or eight feet above the water, and it kept on for another hundred yards after the redwings broke off the action and returned to their base. When it finally dropped to the water in shallows near the river bank, it looked as if it had been heading for that precise spot all along. But of course the redwings would be satisfied that they had successfully driven the huge monster away.

This time of early summer is still providing the bird-watcher with additions to his, or her, notebook for the year. The lists of species seen are lengthening gradually, day by day, as we note birds that we know very well have been in the neighbourhood for weeks but just haven't happened to come across. A typical June week added eight names.

Down river in the Jemseg area there was a bittern flying over some marshy ground, and a common snipe momentarily using the top of a roadside telephone pole as a lookout stand. At Sheffield an osprey circled over the river. Near Birdton I found a wood pewee, and then a rose-breasted grosbeak. It might be more accurate to say the grosbeak found me, for it came and perched on a nearby tree while I was sitting by the roadside for a sandwich lunch. There it sang as though for my special benefit.

Many people interested in birds do not know this species, judging by enquiries I get. If you are among them, I hope you see one soon, for it is a very beautiful bird. About

eight inches long from its ivory-coloured big beak to its black tail, it has black head, back and wings, with conspicuous white markings on wings and rump, and a pure white breast, on which is a large triangular patch of vivid rose-red. Its song is an enchanted melody.

Between Penniac and Durham I saw a catbird and a hermit thrush, and a nighthawk flew overhead one evening at home.

Bird-watching has attracted vastly more people as a hobby in the past twenty years. There is a classic example of how it spreads in the story of the professor who was arrested by a policeman on patrol in 1944 because he was watching birds with his binoculars half a mile from an Ontario military installation. It took him half a day to convince the authorities of the innocence of his intent. Five years later, on a summer afternoon, the same cop came upon the same professor doing the same thing in the same place, but this time the man in blue promptly pulled out a pair of field glasses himself and advanced with the enquiry: "Have you an interesting species in view, sir?"

Young and old and middle-aged are all catching the fever, and find it a hobby that never fails them, whether practised regularly or intermittently. As a form of wildlife observation, it has a great advantage for elderly or no longer athletically inclined people: you can see a very considerable variety of birds without even getting out of the car, if you drive slowly along country roads. You will stop and get out frequently, of course, but you can see the birds without tiring yourself by long walks.

That is my own case. In days long past I could enjoy walking twenty miles across country. Nowadays twenty fur-longs would be too much. So my bird-watching is mostly roadside scouting from my car or near it. But when I saw that rose-breasted grosbeak, it was number one hundred in my list of species seen so far this year.

And while you're looking for the birds, you have all the glories of the scenery thrown in for a bonus, the landscapes of hills and forests and fields splashed with the colours of the wild flowers. What more could anyone ask for rest and relaxation in our urbanized industrial society?



Spotted Sandpiper

JULY

Summer Driver

It is one of the delights of our New Brunswick countryside that if you drive slowly you see so many interesting creatures crossing the road.

One July day, for instance, I stopped as I rounded a bend and saw in front of me a woodcock walking. I had never before come upon one of these birds actually down on the gravel and its manner of progress fascinated me. It was about half way across and moving towards the right-hand ditch in very short jerky stages. It appeared to take about three steps forward, then one back and stop. A few seconds and then again three steps forward one back and halt. Pause and repeat.

The woodcock is a rather comic-looking thing anyway, with its head striped crosswise, its appearance of having no neck at all, and its absurdly long straight bill. Why this one should need so many halts in its march across ten feet of road mystified me completely. It was not gathering grit or anything else with its long bill. Nor could I be absolutely

sure that its stop-and-start movement actually included steps back. Perhaps it just stopped with a backward jerk of its body.

The woodcock reached the edge of the road at last and went into the long grass of the shallow ditch. I started the car again and moved up very slowly the fifteen or twenty yards to where it had been, and then stopped and got out to see if I could find it for another look. It provided that immediately, for it rose abruptly and flew off on a level course about six feet above the ground through a little clearing and finally was lost to view in the wood. Its vigorous flight certainly demonstrated that its peculiar gait on the ground had not been due to any injury.

The windings of the back roads are helpful, for many wild animals apparently pay no attention to the noise of a car not visible to them, though I presume they must hear it, and so we get a sight of them as we round a curve. It was that way that I saw recently a deer with her very young fawn, and that is always a charming picture. When I stopped and looked first with binoculars at fifty yards, the animals took no notice whatever. It was only when I put the car in motion again three or four minutes later that they made off into the woods, and their graceful movements betrayed no alarm or haste then.

Rabbits of all sizes are to be seen along many of the country roads, and they never seem to be in any urgent hurry either when they decide to hop off into the shelter of the bushes on the other side of the ditch. Very often one will wait until your front wheels have rolled slowly to within four or five feet of it before it leaps away.

On the other hand, a chipmunk is always in a desperate rush. Whether it is moving out to the centre of the road, or doubling back to get off it again, the chipmunk tears over the gravel in a scurrying, headlong rush. The straight-up way it carries its tail accentuates the look of speed. In this it differs from a squirrel, I think, because even when it's really travelling fast a squirrel's undulating bushy tail somehow creates an illusion of deliberation, like a slow-motion movie.

Another four-footed animal crossing a road one day was a total surprise to me. That was a mink that suddenly trotted past about ten yards ahead . . . and I wasn't looking for minks. In fact it was the first I had ever seen in the wild state. I could not indeed be absolutely sure of what I had seen until I got home and looked up facts and pictures in a field guide. A mink looks like a weasel, but much bigger — averaging an over-all length of two feet against the weasel's one foot — but then so does a marten. However, I had seen just enough to make the identification with aid of accurate descriptions and coloured pictures in the books.

A very different kind of four-footed creature was a tortoise in the middle of the road on the way to Douglas Harbour. I mean of course that I was on the way to Douglas Harbour. The tortoise was on the way from one-side of the road to the other. It was in no sort of hurry, and when I walked up to it, the only movement it made was to draw in its head and feet. I picked it up and then it clawed the air vigorously. I took it down to the broad dry ditch and placed it on the bank sloping up on the far side. It seemed to me that its chances of survival would be better there, for one of the fairly frequent trucks on the road might fail to steer round it with adequate clearance. Also it was a more suitable spot to have a good look at the odd creature in its beautiful dark green colours than standing in the middle of the road. That tortoise, measured by hand span, was fully eight inches long on the underside of its shell.

Birds on Road Gravel

The birds that are most frequently to be seen down on the gravel of the side roads are the evening grosbeaks. In fact I'm sure you see little flocks of them three times as often on the ground as flying past or perched in trees. Careful slow driving is needed to avoid hitting some of them. These grosbeaks, so beautiful in their striking pattern of yellow, white and black, seem indifferent to traffic. Often they don't rise until a car is within a yard or two, and then are likely to fly only a few yards close to the ground and

drop down again. This excessive tameness or indifference to men and machines accounts for the considerable number of dead grosbeaks lying on the roads.

All the wildlife you see is interesting and the sudden surprises add a special thrill. In past years I have seen several moose, bears twice, and one bobcat as well as raccoons, woodchucks, porcupines, foxes, skunks and weasels, all without needing to get out of the car.

That's New Brunswick, isn't it? It is always worth while when you see movement in the roadside trees and bushes to look what caused it. It will certainly be something interesting . . . and one of these days it might even turn out to be a panther.

It always seems a good idea for peaceable bird-watchers, especially if elderly, to keep away from the more heavily travelled highways on holiday weekends. It is astonishing how many birds can be observed from a car driven at what has been called "ornithological speed", which means something that will allow a quick, quiet stop whenever something of interest is spotted. To enjoy that sort of exploration, you must clearly not be anywhere roaring with fast-moving streams of traffic, because you don't want to feel you are holding anything up and you don't want the noise all round.

Incidentally, the road down to Birdton provided an exception to the rule that birds and animals of less often seen species never appear twice in the same place. Exactly where we had seen one about this time last year, a fox came out into the middle of the road and then trotted off into the woods again.

The country is a riot of colour now with the profusion of wild-flowers along the roadsides and in the fields. It is always so at this season, but I think we never before enjoyed such quantities of irises and buttercups. There are wild roses, yellow and orange hawkweeds, marguerites, clover of various colours, all in broad masses of bloom. In secluded spots you find less obvious things, such as a little clump of veronica or some toadflax or a long trail of twin-flower.

A Pattern of Birds

As the summer wears on, slowly our year's list of birds seen gets here one and there another added. One of the quite usual things in this countryside is the marsh hawk, yet one year we had not spotted a single one until a July Sunday. Then two showed up a few miles apart.

Another day it was a parula warbler. The score was at twelve species of the colourful little warblers, but it had not included the not uncommon parula.

Once we came upon a little grouping of birds that seemed to have the appearance of a Japanese print and we stood looking at it for minutes. Behind a group of small spruce stood a twenty-foot deciduous tree that for some reason had never a leaf on its slender branches and twigs. Here perched three birds. At the top was a robin. Four feet below and somewhat to the right was a cedar waxwing. A foot lower and over to the left of the spray of branches a white-throated sparrow completed an artistic triangular "arrangement of birds".

Back home, we saw in a neighbour's garden a robin battling with a paper bag big enough for him to have got inside. He knocked that bag down, picked it up again and threw it to one side, yanked at it again and again. Finally he went off with a five-inch strip of the paper. It did not seem to occur to the bird that it could tear paper more effectively if it put a foot on it first.

Ducklings Swim Fast

The black duck swimming upstream in the St. John River was accompanied by six ducklings. When we spotted them and parked the car on the shoulder of the road to watch, they were moving in a formation of line ahead in close order. In fact, each little bird followed the one in front so immediately that they seemed to be touching, and the string with the mother duck leading looked like one long water creature sliding along.

What the normal swimming speed of a black duck may be is information not immediately available in my books.

It was interesting to observe that this one seemed to be going quite fast, but the little ducklings evidently had no difficulty at all in keeping up.

Only once in twenty or thirty yards did they vary their close formation. The duck made a half turn and reduced speed, and the ducklings at once split into two divisions, three of them on each side and rushing up ahead, like a flotilla of small destroyers escorting a big ship. Then the duck straightened out on a new course at the old speed and the line of six resumed position following.

Presently they came to a patch of reeds and disappeared into it.

Disappearing into reeds, rushes or cattails was a trick that more than one kind of bird could play. Down below Sheffield we saw two bitterns flying over a pond the width of a big field away. One after the other, within half a minute, each flew over the water and went down into the tall stems at the edge. Now, the bittern is a big brown bird, more than two feet in average body length, yet each of these when it alighted just vanished utterly. Though we marked to within a yard or two exactly the spot to look with binoculars not a feather could be located!

Over one of the ponds a short distance before you come to the Jemseg bridge, black terns were much in evidence. It was a good place to watch them, for mostly they were swooping around just a foot or two above the surface of the water, and from the road edge we were looking down on to their gray wings and backs at a range of twenty yards, but every now and then one flew past a few feet above us and displayed the black plumage of the rest of the body.

Unwanted Nest

We had three nesting boxes in the garden, two single ones and a double-ended house. English sparrows have had a box, and tree swallows have been, and are, a joy to watch at the two entrances of the divided box.

Nothing made use of the third box, apparently, but recently that too has been investigated by tree swallows. Always they flew to the entrance hole and then away.

Then one day I saw a wasp go in there and not come out, so I got a ladder up to see what the situation was. Sure enough, inside the box, against the sloped roof the wasps had built a paper nest.

Wasps are no doubt interesting creatures, too, but we don't like them as near neighbours, and anyway the box was intended for swallows. So a puff of a fly spray disposed of the insects, and soon the box was cleaned out. Within hours tree swallows were examining the possible housing made available.

All the same, that spherical gray paper construction is a marvel of instinctive building on the part of the wasps.

Scarlet Tanager and Other Birds

It was in the Burt's Corner area, a few miles up one of the country side-roads that we saw a beautiful scarlet tanager. We were driving along very slowly, looking in the bushes for what might be found, when my wife suddenly said: "Stop! There's a scarlet tanager!" I stopped the car, and there was the bird on a low branch beside the road, not more than five yards away.

For nearly ten minutes we just sat admiring it. There is probably no more beautiful colour in the world than the vivid red of this tanager, accented by the black wings against the smooth bright scarlet of the whole head and body.

The tanager seemed to be just putting in time, enjoying the summer afternoon. He moved to another branch four feet higher, changed position to another little tree five feet nearer, hopped down to a twig lower on the trunk, sitting on each quietly for a minute or two, and all the time staying on practically bare twigs where his loveliness was visible to perfection.

We did not move until the scarlet tanager decided it was time for him to visit somewhere else and flew off.

Evening grosbeaks were to be seen all over the countryside in that direction in little flocks, usually announcing their presence, too, by loud chirping. Some were young birds

that could occasionally be observed accepting food from a parent on a branch.

Birds that we saw in several places in what seemed family groups of three, four or five were yellow-bellied sapsuckers and blue jays. Purple finches, cedar waxwings, kingbirds, crows and red-winged blackbirds were much in evidence. Ravens appeared in two places. Altogether the list of species for the afternoon came to twenty-five. Oddly it did not include a single warbler.

The day before, however, we had in one spot on the Royal Road come upon a little group of two or three parula warblers. They were very near and low in the bushes, so that we could observe clearly the area of green in the middle of the blue back.

A Woodpecker Weekend

Two weekend morning walks in the Odell Wood were made very pleasant by a colourful variety of birds. On Saturday a family of flickers came first, then numerous robins, and here and there goldfinches passed above us in their undulating flight, dropping now and then to settle on some tall weed now affording an ample supply of seeds.

Along the railroad track we saw a couple of cedar waxwings, a catbird, a yellow warbler, an olive-backed thrush. Farther up the hill, chipping sparrows were much in evidence, with two or three juncos, a white-throated sparrow, more robins and two crows. On Smythe Street a kingbird perched on a telephone wire.

On Sunday all these species but the kingbird were seen again. At one point a pair of evening grosbeaks seemed to be chatting together in domestic harmony on a sapling branch at eye-level hardly six feet away from us. They took no notice of watching human beings, but soon departed on affairs of their own. Soon after that a rose-breasted grosbeak flew out from the edge of the wood and passed just overhead.

At a corner a veery stood on a branch in clear view, displaying his breast first, then turning round, as if to make

evident that his back was all "rufous" the point that distinguishes him from the hermit thrush, which has only the tail rufous, and the wood thrush, which shows his red tinge at the head and neck.

Then suddenly it turned into a woodpecker morning. We had been commenting lately on how few woodpeckers there seem to be this year, except for the plentiful flickers. Hardly one woodpecker in every four walks had been the proportion. Then along one of the trails we saw four kinds in five minutes.

It began with flickers, a whole family of them, maybe two families. Then low on a tree-trunk a yellow-bellied sapsucker alighted: a female without the red patches but with the lengthwise, up-and-down white stripe on the wing quite conspicuous. A few yards away we came upon another woodpecker about five feet up on a trunk, a bird with barred back and sides, and brilliant yellow on the head: an American three-toed woodpecker. That's rare in this region; in fact we had only seen one once before, eight or ten years ago. And after that a hairy woodpecker showed up not far away.

More colour was provided, too, by four or five blue jays flitting about from side to side in and out of the trail.

Two Black-Billed Cuckoos

They were far apart. Word came from Mr. Walter Wade of Penniac that a cuckoo seemed to be in residence near his home, so naturally we drove out to try to see it.

We were shown the thicket of bushes where it usually appeared, with a rather bare sapling in the middle that was its favourite perch, so we parked the car on the roadside and watched. Sure enough, in three or four minutes the bird arrived.

It seemed quite indifferent to people watching from six to eight yards. It flew a few feet from the little tree to a bush, back to its tree, over to a pile of dead branches, off to another bush, then back to the tree.

Twice while we watched, the cuckoo turned towards us and uttered its kuk-kuk-kuk throaty note. On previous oc-

casions when we had seen a black-billed cuckoo it had been a quick glimpse only as the bird flew past or through some trees. This Penniac specimen might have been putting on a display especially for our benefit, and it was quite beautiful.

The next evening we happened to stop at the drugstore in Nashwaaksis. As I waited in the car, the man in the one alongside got out and went to look at something near his front wheel. The next man joined him, and as my wife came out of the store we went to look too.

"There's a bird here," said the first man, "and I just saw it fall right down from that power wire up there."



Brown-headed Cowbird

The bird was lying, apparently helpless, on the ground. It was another black-billed cuckoo!

I picked it up and said we would try to do something for it. So we took it away and went to get a box, wondering just what to do. Nearly always a sick or injured bird will die before morning if you try to keep and feed it.

Then the thought came: why not take it out to Penniac and liberate it in the field? Out there it was obviously good caterpillar country for cuckoos, as you might say.

So we drove out with it, and after showing it to Mrs. Wade, set it down in the grass near the bushes. It did not seem injured actually, for when we approached it again it flew a couple of yards and then rested on the ground once more. It would have anyway a better chance to recover there than on a Nashwaaksis sidewalk.

Both evenings we made a circuit by driving on up to Durham Bridge and crossing to the main highway there. On the east side of the Nashwaak it is a broad gravel road, with more rabbits than cars using it. Once there was a glimpse of a fawn at the forest edge, and a group of four ravens a mile farther along the peaceful way. It made a pleasant drive.

Spruce Grouse

On a drive in the Ripples area, one of the things we saw was a little group of four or five, a family maybe, of spruce grouse. Just how many, it was impossible to determine. Two were out on the edge of the ditch of a road through the woods, and there was movement in the bushes behind them. It did not take more than a few seconds to stop a very slowly cruising car and get out, but by that time they were all in among the trees again. I tried to follow them in, but a split-second view of two of them ghosting through dense undergrowth was all I could manage. It was enough to demonstrate how perfectly their dark plumage is designed for concealment in the woods. In his book Mr. Squires classifies the spruce grouse as an uncommon resident, formerly abundant. It has been known in New Brunswick as a soft-wood partridge and as the "fool hen". The latter name was given it because of its lack of suspicion of men, but these we saw were cautious enough and took swift evasive action.

At one point my wife spotted a small bird on a roadside bush and by the time we got out to look more closely it was down on the gravel surface. It proved to be a white-winged crossbill, a female. I could not remember that we had ever seen a crossbill on the ground before, but it must presumably need grit for its digestive system, and where better to get some than on a gravel road? This female (or perhaps young) bird was a very green olive in general colour, with conspicuous broad white wingbars, and when it flew off the "yellowish rump" mentioned in the books proved to be a much brighter yellow at close quarters than we had supposed.

Everywhere now there are long rows of swallows on the telephone or power wires. How did those birds make out before men strung such convenient assembly lines all over the countryside?

Four-footed creatures seen along a woods road were a red squirrel that thoroughly disapproved of being watched, and a deer mouse that allowed only a glimpse but enough to note its size, shape and colour.

Catbird Show-Off

July one year had not been a very good month for bird-watching. Mostly when time was available a cold rain was falling, most discouraging for drives in the country.

A rather unusual sight one of the days we did get out was a catbird putting himself on display. As a rule the word you think of for that species is "lurking". You hear one mewling like a cat, perhaps adding occasional bits of song, evidently deep in an impenetrable tangle of bushes. If he does show himself, it is just a quick glimpse as he moves out of one low leafy branch across to another.

The catbird we saw was not like that. He came out from the shrubs and up on the top of an old fence post. There in full view, he cocked up his head and tail and looked at us from five yards away. Then he turned around, showing all sides of his slate-gray and black plumage. Round to face us again and then bowing low, head far down as though to demonstrate specially his black velvet cap. He must have spent three or four minutes posing in a succession of different attitudes before flying off into the thick bushes again.

Birds seen in or from the garden have varied much lately. There is always some food available, but the only permanent population consists of a bunch of house sparrows. Earlier in the summer there would be daily half a dozen or more grackles and a like number of brown-headed cowbirds. These stayed around much longer than the juncos and white-crowned sparrows and other spring callers. In the past few weeks there have been no grackles or cowbirds either, until Wednesday, when a couple of gleaming grackles showed up again.

Crows make themselves heard very early in the morning and may be seen flying off somewhere in a south-westerly direction. Nothing more is seen or heard of them until the evening. Commuters evidently.

The Hare Was Interested

We were driving very slowly along a road through the woods away behind the Ranger School when we met the snowshoe hare. It was a brown blur that slipped down into the ditch quietly. As I automatically stopped the car, I noticed that no disturbance in the bushes showed animal movement on the other side of the shallow channel. So I walked a few steps nearer. The brown blur was a furry body now, a beautiful hare.

As I stopped to look at him, the hare got himself up on the inner bank of the little ditch, turned round and sat on his hind legs very erect to look at me.

Another step towards him and he did not move. One more step and stop. The hare straightened himself a little higher on the big hind legs, short forelegs held drooping over his chest, apparently anxious to get the best possible view of this bigger animal that also had an upright posture. A distance of five feet is excellent for seeing anything in good detail!

Four feet was evidently for the snowshoe hare a little too close range, for when I moved the next step he turned, but in no great hurry apparently, and loped off into the bushes.

Seen close like that, these hares have very beautiful eyes.

Country Rambles

Time was when a country ramble meant anything from five to twenty miles on foot, mainly by lanes and foot-paths. Now it is driving a car more probably fifty or sixty miles than five, but still using side roads rather than main highways as much as possible. The essential of the definition is "to go from place to place, for pleasure, and without any definite goal or required route."

If you want to go to Burt's Corner for a purpose, you drive out by the paved highroad No. 24, and that's a journey. If you set off just "up river" and come upon a side road with a marker 'Scotch Lake' and turn into it because it looks attractive, you have to decide at the end of it whether to turn right or left. You go to the right and after a while you are admiring the view from the high point of Keswick Ridge, and so in time by way of Zealand you reach Burt's Corner, and that's rambling. After that there are still several different routes to choose for the way home, though the most likely are those that will ultimately take you to Kingsley, because there will be more birds and wild flowers along the way.

Most interesting sight on a Saturday ramble was a spruce grouse with young. The adult bird was slowly, very deliberately, crossing a road through the woods over Ripples way. We stopped to watch and then saw that two little bundles of brown feathers were near her in the shallow ditch. One of them flew up and perched for a while on a low branch of a roadside fir. The other disappeared into the undergrowth, where presently the hen grouse followed. A spruce grouse with young chicks in train will, Mr. Melvin Moore tells me, turn and give battle to a human being coming too close. Apparently we had stopped at a reasonable distance, for the grouse took no notice of us.

A hundred yards farther along that road we found cotton-grass. It's an interesting wild plant, looking like a thin rush or grass, a sedge actually in the botanists' books, with the stem showing a narrow spear-leaf high up, and bunches of cotton hanging from the joint, each bunch looking like a miniature white utility brush.

That ramble became a journey when a thunderstorm set rain falling heavily as we neared Sheffield.

Many of the commonest birds in this area are colourful things. On weekend rambles we saw many evening grosbeaks, for instance, and purple finches. There were redwings and a lone cedar waxwing. Flickers seemed to be very numerous, always single birds but along the edges of woods one seemed to fly out and plunge back into the trees every few hundred yards.

One of the rarer birds we saw was a wood thrush, which perched, silent and still, displaying its heavily-spotted breast, on a bare branch ten feet up and close by the roadside.

Another uncommon bird made itself heard for some time before we caught a glimpse of it in a tall spruce. This was a red-tailed hawk, which utters an extremely loud, harsh scream. You hear it first and wonder if a young woman is in the wood screaming in agony while being mauled by a bear, if you have that sort of imagination! The screams went on intermittently for several minutes, with a raven's deep croak making a most unmusical duet with it at intervals. Source of a bird note is often hard to make out among trees, but we finally located the big hawk high up in a tree some way in from the road, just in time before it took off and was immediately lost to sight.

Black and White Beauty

One July evening we were driving home on the gravel road of McLeod Hill and were perhaps half way down the long slope towards Nashwaaksis when we saw two skunks come up from the ditch on to the road.

I stopped the car and we sat watching. The animals were about fifty yards away, which is not too far for a clear view in binoculars. Who wants to find out, anyway, at what closeness of approach a skunk considers himself crowded?

These two skunks may well have been a mated pair, out for an evening stroll together. One followed the other closely at a very gentle trot for ten yards up, then they turned back and ambled along down the slope. After twenty yards, the one behind caught up alongside the other and patted it on the back with a forepaw. This was a signal for an about-turn again. The trotting up hill and down went on for several minutes, with an occasional feint at plunging into the grass-choked ditch again.

A number of times we have seen skunks, but always, as it has happened, one at a time, except for an occasion when a female was seen with several small young ones following her along a lane. The sight of a pair just enjoying

themselves, running about so gently in company, may be common, but it was the first time we had had an opportunity to observe it.

The thing that struck us most was the astonishing beauty of the skunks. Against the black parts of their fur, the white stripes stood out so dazzlingly white, so clean-looking, and the pattern was so striking.

In the end, the two skunks seemed to decide they had done enough exercise on the road surface and they disappeared into the ditch. They must, I think, have gone on into the bushes behind, for a couple of cars came past just seconds after the animals vanished.

July Drives for Bird-Watching

One day late in July I went rambling along some woods roads where I had been told scarlet tanagers had been seen. As so often happens in bird-watching, no bird of the hoped-for species came my way, but I did find something else rated as uncommon, and that's one of the charms of the hobby too.

I was driving very slowly on a quite good piece of gravel road that circles round for a few miles without ever actually going anywhere, when I saw a big hawk perched on a branch hardly thirty yards ahead. I stopped the car and had the glasses on it for a minute or two before it moved.

It was a red-tailed hawk, a young bird that did not in fact have a red tail. The juveniles have dark grey tails. It was pretty well grown, though. Adult red-tails vary in length from nineteen to twenty-five inches, and I estimated this one to be all of twenty inches. It moved off, but only to another tree about fifty yards farther away, giving me a good chance to see the shape of wings and tail as it flew. I had another good look at it with my binoculars when it perched again, then I eased the car forward a little. Evidently the young hawk considered this as too much intrusion, for it took off then and disappeared behind the trees.

For centuries hawks have been held in disrepute by country people, mainly on prejudice entirely unsupported by

evidence, and indiscriminate shooting has been the common practice. Now, fortunately, a more enlightened attitude is spreading, which is bound to be good for both hawks and farmers.

To take an example or two: In his excellent book on the birds of Nova Scotia, Robie Tufts remarks that the sharp-shinned hawk is commonly known in his province as the chicken hawk, but he has been unable to find any record of such a hawk ever attacking a chicken. Examination of a large number of specimens in scientific research showed broad-winged hawks to have eaten many mice and other small animals, many insects, a few small birds but no poultry or game. That is the usual diet pattern for most species of hawks, so that they are very beneficial in an agricultural economy and should be welcomed. In New Brunswick all are now protected.

Soon after I saw the red-tailed hawk a spruce grouse flew across the road. It too was the first of its species I had seen that year.

Another July day I was looking for birds on side roads in the Hainesville area. There were plenty to be seen, all of familiar species: robins, swallows of various kinds, song sparrows, chipping sparrows, cedar waxwings, flickers. Suddenly there was something to make me stop the car and sit watching and counting. On the gravel of the road there was a little flock of birds, purple finches, no fewer than eleven of them in a couple of square yards, and most of them were males in shining crimson plumage.

To adapt Winnie the Pooh's famous remark that no one could be uncheered by a balloon, no one surely could remain uncheered by a purple finch, and eleven together are very cheering indeed. Purple, as Peterson points out, is hardly the right adjective, it is rather an old rose or raspberry tint.

Many of the birds have now finished raising their young and abandoned their nests for this season, and some species have formed flocks that will stay in company until it comes time to migrate in the fall. At Lower St. Mary's, for

instance, the gravel pit of the big colony of bank swallows is deserted. Where for weeks there had been ceaseless, fast-moving activity, there was not, when I passed the other day, a single swallow to be seen. The rows of nest-holes in tiers on the sand wall reminded me somehow of pictures of Aztec ruins or remains of Mexican cliff-dwellings.

Ruffed Grouse

Not far from there I stopped to watch a flock of nighthawks. These birds will now be commonly found in companies of anything from ten to fifty together. It's an interesting sight, for they seem to move their long, narrow, white-banded wings so little, just a casual-looking scissor-flick now and then, yet they keep up a high-speed zigzag of flight in their insect hunting.

Another July day when I was driving slowly along a country road between Douglas Harbour and Ripples, I met a ruffed grouse. The books all say it's the other one, the spruce grouse, that is so heedless of human approach as to be known as the fool hen, the bird that a hungry settler could get for the pot by just walking up to it and hitting it with a stick. The ruffed grouse is described as a wary game bird, more apt to fly up with explosive violence and a great whirring of wings to disappear among the trees.

Well, I've often seen a ruffed grouse do that, but this one was quite calm about being watched at close quarters. It was standing in the short grass edging the road between the gravel and the ditch, and it showed no alarm when I rolled my car very cautiously almost level with it, and stopped. I sat there with the bird on my left, just the half road width away, and watched it. The grouse seemed to be watching me, but without excitement.

It ruffled out the neck feathers for which it is named, and let them fall again. Then it spread its tail in a perfect fan shape, so that at ten feet range I could see every fine crosswise stripe and the heavier dark stripe near the end of the tail, with every feather distinct from the next. Most of

the plumage of a ruffed grouse is a sort of mottled brown, but it occurs in two colour phases, one with a reddish tail, the other with a light grey tail. This was a grey bird.

Presently it took two immensely deliberate steps, for all the world like something exaggerated for comic effect in a slow-motion movie. Then it stood still again and put on a repeat performance of the neck ruffling and tail spreading.

It might have continued, but just then a car came along the road and passed between me and the grouse. It was within a yard, travelling at just moderate speed with a certain amount of dust swirling from the wheels, before the bird moved, flying up and back from the road.

To my surprise it did not go far, just to a fallen tree trunk about three yards in from the ditch. There it took a stand on the top of the log and began the ruffling up of its feathers again. Several times it took a couple of slow steps along and then stood to fan out its tail once more.

Finally, about six or seven minutes later I should think, the grouse fluttered down to the ground and went off behind some undergrowth. I got out of the car then and walked over to see where it went, but I just could not find it at all. Grouse are experts when it comes to hiding in a tangled woods background.

Confusion in Names

Most people call the grouse a partridge, and that is an interesting illustration of how the names given by country-folk and sportsmen to familiar birds may vary. Partridge seems to be applied generally to both the grouse species that live in this part of Canada. To distinguish them when necessary, the spruce grouse is called spruce partridge or softwood partridge, and the ruffed grouse is a birch partridge, or a hardwood partridge, or just a bircher.

That appears to have been the commonest practice, at least, according to a National Museum booklet there is on the folk names of our birds. It is confused, though, by all manner of different local words. The spruce grouse, as well as being a softwood partridge or a fool hen, has also been

known as a black partridge, a grey partridge, a swamp grouse and a Yukon chicken. The ruffed grouse has been known also as a drummer, a French hen, a pine pheasant or just plain pheasant, and a quail. All very confusing, isn't it?

Talk of the different names that a species of bird may be known by is apt to get me going on another of my hobbies, the study of words and their origins and meanings. There are many interesting things to observe about the country names of birds.

The names for familiar birds may, for instance, vary considerably in distribution. All over Canada the great blue heron is commonly called a crane. Herons of course are not cranes. The Canada jay or grey jay, on the other hand, is called a gorbey only in New Brunswick, though several of its other aliases are found in a number of provinces, camp robber, meat bird, moose bird and whiskyjack being the commonest.

Many of these names are interesting in their derivation, too. Grouse itself is a mystery, a word to which the etymologists can only put the note "origin unknown". They say that too about the other word grouse, meaning to grumble or complain, which was originally British army slang. Where the troops got it from is unexplained, the only certain thing being that the two words grouse have nothing to do with each other.

Partridge came to us from the Latin. It was perdux then, with no "r" in the second syllable. That was acquired in Old French, and it's an odd thing that in Canadian use it is often pronounced as just *partridge*, getting rid of the "r" of the first syllable.

Whiskyjack has nothing to do with the products of distilleries. It is an Indian word, or a rendering into English of the Indian name of a benevolent spirit or supernatural being for whom the moose bird was supposed to speak, directing the hunter to a moose.

The New Brunswick name gorbey is probably a variation of corbie, which used to mean a raven or crow and I believe still does in Scotland.

Many of these local names are dying out now, and that is not to be regretted. They were confusing, for not only might one species have many names, but a name might be used for several species. If someone spoke of a rain-bird, the hearer would have to remember where he was before interpreting. A rain-bird could be a black-billed cuckoo or a flicker or a blue jay or a hermit thrush.

Just as it's usually best for understanding to call a spade a spade, it's helpful to call a grouse a grouse. The name may not be as beautiful as the bird, but it keeps things clear.

Thrashers' Second Nest

A pair of brown thrashers took up summer quarters at Penniac. This species is rated in *Birds of New Brunswick* as "very rare summer resident" and at the date of publication the New Brunswick Museum had no record of any thrashers breeding in this province. There has, I believe, been just one since.

These at Penniac built a nest in the middle of a pile of cut bushes and when I saw it there were four healthy-looking young birds in it.

Unfortunately a cat got at the nest and killed all four fledglings.

The parent birds stayed in the vicinity and this week Mr. Walter Wade telephoned to tell me he had pretty good evidence that they had made a second nest. He had not actually seen it, but the thrashers were making repeated visits to the middle of a very dense clump of alders.

It was not possible to see into the thick growth or to push into it any nearer to the middle. At a time when he had seen the thrashers leave, he thought maybe he could crawl on the ground where it might be possible to get a yard or two in, but the instant he tried that, one thrasher hurriedly returned and began to tell him in no uncertain terms to get right away out of there.

Mr. Wade got out of there. The behaviour of the bird seemed good enough evidence that the alder clump must contain their nest with something in it.

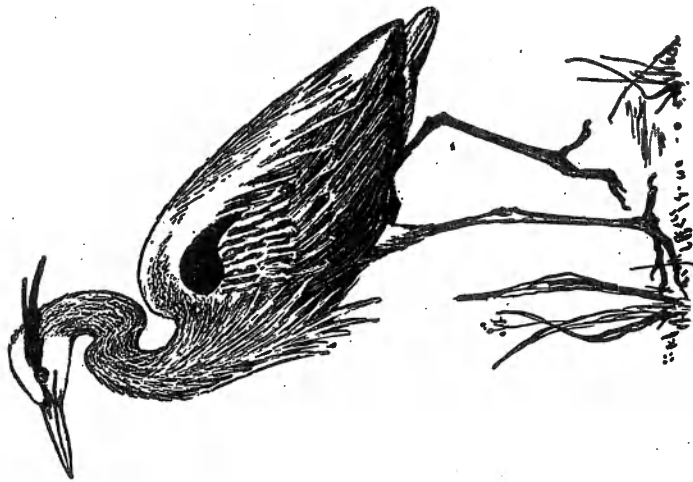
Later Mr. Walter Wade telephoned with the welcome news that the pair of brown thrashers in his garden at Penniac had been more successful with their second nest and had two young now flying in company with them.

Mr. Wade told me that these young birds look exactly like their parents in form and colour, except that they have not yet grown their tails to proportionate length.

Here is the description of a brown thrasher again: upper parts bright reddish-brown; two white wing bars; under parts buffy white with breast, sides and flanks heavily streaked with dark brown; eye yellow. It has a length of ten to twelve inches and its tail accounts for approximately half of that.

When *The Birds of New Brunswick* was published about sixteen years ago, Dr. Squires listed the brown thrasher as a very rare summer resident, but with no breeding records for the province. It seems to be still just as rare, but there are now breeding records; this is still only the second, though.

The thrasher's song is delivered in paired phrases and according to Robie Tufts in the Nova Scotia book it was the famous American writer Thoreau who, after listening to it while he was planting beans in his garden one day, remarked that it could be interpreted as *drop it, drop it; cover it up, cover it up; pull it up, pull it up*.



Great Blue Heron

AUGUST

Summer Day by Grand Lake

The old proverbial phrase that says of a man that all is grist that comes to his mill fits bird-watchers very well. Any bird that comes along is interesting and beautiful, welcome material for his hobby. He may, for instance, spend an hour looking for a particular bird reported to be in some small area and not find it, but the time spent won't be wasted because half a dozen other species will come along and engage his attention.

Here's an example. One August day I drove down through Scotchtown and along to the dead end where the road stops by the waterside. There I parked and then walked on a track between trees that leads to the edge of a big marsh beyond. All that area is a maze of channels and long narrow islands and wide stretches of marsh, and at times during the past few weeks two green herons had been observed there. That's a species not on my list yet, and I was hoping to see one of them.

Well, I failed to find a green heron, but there were a number of other things to watch. First a kingfisher flew across a broad waterway and vanished behind an island. The belted kingfisher is always a spectacular sight with his gay pattern of blue and white, his great beak and tousled crest, and his odd upright bearing as he flies fast on a horizontal course. This one just happened to be the first I had seen all summer, too. There don't seem to be as many of them as usual this year.

Then a lone black duck swam along, voyaging placidly with half a mile of a broad channel of still water to himself, not in any hurry, not feeding, just on a leisurely journey or perhaps merely out enjoying the summer sunshine.

There were half a dozen black terns flying over vast expanse of reeds and water-lilies and pickerel weed. I am no botanist, but I looked that one up later and I think I identified it correctly, a strong plant growing in the water to a height of two or three feet above the surface, with broad spear-blades of leaves and short spikes of attractive blue flowers. And I thought again of the odd circumstance that Sunbury County is the only part of New Brunswick, in fact the only area in the Atlantic provinces, where this graceful tern is known to breed. From Quebec west it is common practically all across Canada, especially in the prairies, according to the books.

Movement closer to me caught my eye, and there on a bare branch of a small dead bush only four or five yards away was a female yellowthroat. It probably had a nest somewhere near, for it flew off, dived into a mass of tall close-growing greenery, came out again half a minute later

to rest for a few seconds on the bare twigs, went off again. I watched it for several minutes, admiring the vivid yellow of the throat that gives this species of warbler its name, but I did not see any male bird with conspicuous black mask over forehead and sides of head.

There was a song sparrow in the bush next to the one the yellowthroat was using. Across the main channel of water a few redwinged blackbirds moved about restlessly, and a couple of crows flew past.

When I gave up hope of seeing herons of any species and walked back to my car, I saw on the way some more song sparrows, a young robin, and then a pair of flickers on the highest bare branch of a tree with a dead top. They perched there for a couple of minutes, making odd-looking bows to each other. It was a rather convulsive, stiff movement of bill, head and neck stretched bolt upright and half twisting at the same time. This was a performance I had never watched before. Most birds of course have courtship rituals of one kind and another. The flickers perched six or eight inches apart, bowed several times, shuffled along the branch a foot, went through the procedure again and finally flew off in company.

When I came out through the bushes at the road end, I stopped for another look round with the binoculars, and immediately I was joined by a killdeer. That is, the killdeer flew in, uttering its sharp, shrill note, and alighted on the beach about four yards away. No one could mistake a killdeer for any other plover even the first time of seeing it, for the two conspicuous black bands across the white breast are quite distinctive. This one poked about at the edge of the water for several minutes, allowing me to take several slow steps nearer to it until I was watching it at a range of six feet. Finally it took to flight again and disappeared round a bend in the channel.

That made an interesting hour, and before I got there I had already observed about thirty other species. On the way back, for good measure, I had a good close-up look at a sparrow hawk or kestrel — that's the name I prefer — that I saw perched on a telephone wire.

Black Bear on a Road

One hot August afternoon we were down Rusagonis way and at one point came upon the first large assembly of swallows on wires that we had seen this season. I was able to make a rough count and found that perched close together as their habit is, on two power or telephone wires between two posts, there were rather more than two hundred swallows.

Then on a side road we had taken at a venture in that area our interest was suddenly switched to the four-footed wildlife. It was a road of sharp ups and down like a roller-coaster, and coming up one ridge to the point of seeing over the top, we sighted a black object moving about on the next ridge, hardly two hundred yards away. I stopped the car and took up the field-glasses.

Sure enough it was a large black bear.

We watched for a minute or more while it ambled slowly down the slope towards us. Then apparently it decided that it was going in the wrong direction, for it turned and began to walk slowly up the hill, pausing from time to time to investigate something at the roadside.

I started the car again and we moved forward to get a closer view. We had got within about seventy yards, I think, when the bear saw or heard the car. It had been crossing the road at a slow walk, a saunter, when three-quarters of the way over it suddenly broke into a fast trot and hastily vanished into the undergrowth of the wood there.

It was only the second time we had come across a bear in our years of bird-watching drives and we could not have had a better observation of one. The field-guide book gives particulars of the "black bear, *Ursus americanus*," as "head and body 5-6 feet; height at shoulder 2-3 feet; weight 200-400 lbs." Well, I don't want to claim that "our" bear was anything out of the ordinary. I'll settle for a weight estimate of 395 lb.

At the other end of the scale, we had had, a couple of evenings before, the closest view of a "rabbit" or snowshoe hare that we had ever had from a car. The animal allowed us to pull up exactly level with him at the other side

of the road and went on nibbling at whatever it had found at the edge of the gravel while we sat and watched, for at least two minutes. Then a car came by on its side of the road and the rabbit went up the bank, all of three yards.

Nighthawks

For the past few days two nighthawks have been spending their days on the branches of a tree just outside a window of our apartment. This has provided an opportunity to watch and time their behaviour. These two evidently do a night shift of approximately twelve hours. They come down and settle on the top of a thick, horizontal limb, or rather each on one limb about six feet away from the other, at nine or nine-fifteen in the morning and stay there, with only slight movement from time to time, all day. In the evening, about half-past eight, they begin to sit up and preen themselves. There is a very leisurely getting ready for work, with an occasional stretching of wings, until finally about fifteen minutes past nine first one, then five minutes later the other, will at last open their long, narrow and powerful wings and take off.

Like all goatsuckers (a name originally given in the mistaken belief that they sucked milk from goats in pastures!) the nighthawk has very small, weak feet, so it sits lengthwise on branches instead of across and gripping them as other birds do. They feed entirely on insects caught on the wing.

The nighthawk emits a squeaky note as it flies. It also makes its well-known "zwang," by folding its wings and diving almost straight down from a great height, then suddenly opening its wings again to zoom up, this manoeuvre causing the noise like an enormous banjo string breaking. This is explained by ornithologists as a courtship proceeding. All dates of finding nighthawk eggs in the province, according to *The Birds of New Brunswick*, are in June, and it is normally early in the summer that the "zwang" is heard. So one nighthawk doing a bit of daytime flying out behind the Ranger School last Saturday must have got his calendar mixed. He dived "zwanging" several times.

Other names for the nighthawk are "mosquito-hawk," "bull-bat" and "nightjar."

Birds by the Shore

On a vacation at Burnt Church we identified sixty-six species in our bird-watching walks.

Most abundant were the swallows. The majority were barn swallows, but we saw also the tree, bank and cliff kinds. Nighthawks were to be seen in flocks of as many as twenty-five at a time. Flickers were numerous, as they have been in the Fredericton area this summer. Warblers included myrtle, parula, chestnut-sided, black and white, Nashville, yellow, Canada, and redstart. The flycatchers were kingbird, wood pewee, yellow-bellied, least, and olive-sided.

On the beach the ruddy turnstones showed up on the fourth day and every day after that. These are fascinating birds, picturesque in ruddy back with the fantastic pattern of black and white in a "futuristic" design on head and neck. Approach slowly as you watch them busily turning over the pebbles to seek food underneath, and suddenly, when you get within thirty yards, they take flight and reveal a new dramatic pattern of black and white in "cubist" sort of design, as they skim out a foot above the water. Usually they describe a semi-circle with you as centre, coming in to the beach again to resume hunting thirty yards behind you. Generally there were four or six together, but sometimes eleven or twelve, and once we saw a flock of seventeen. As they are on early southward migration, presumably it was a different lot each day.

We saw spotted, solitary, semi-palmated, and least sandpipers; semi-palmated plover; cormorants; great blue herons, sometimes as many as nine together wading off the point; common terns; and gulls.

The terns were much more numerous than the gulls. There were never more than two or three herring gulls and a single greater black-backed gull. Then one morning when my wife was just putting out a few breakfast crumbs for the sparrows, she called that there were some gulls with black heads and bring field-glasses quick, please. There were four,

one an immature bird without the black head, the other three with complete black "hoods". They swam around, and several times one lifted from the water, flew a few yards as if specially to display the triangle of white on the front edge of the wing that is a decisive field mark: Bonaparte's gulls.

These are "not uncommon transients", according to the *Birds of New Brunswick* book, but we had only seen one once before and then not clearly enough to be sure of identification. The four birds flew off after ten minutes. That's where luck came in: if we had been a quarter of an hour later with breakfast . . .

A day later luck favoured us again. It was a fine day after several showery ones and we ate supper outside the cabin. Suddenly I noticed three smallish gulls flying along the beach line, forty feet up and thirty yards away. I exclaimed: "What are these?" and my wife, looking up, said: "Look, that gull's got a pink breast!" So it had, a quite strong rose-pink. They were gulls with dark heads, too.

We searched through gulls in Peterson's *Field Guide* and for a time indulged in a "wild surmise" that they might be black-headed gulls strayed from Europe. These, said the book, show up at times on the New England coast, and there was no other mention of any gull with pink. Investigation of Taverner's *Birds of Canada*, however, brought the information that Bonaparte's gulls may — but do not always — have this pink colouring. So we settled for more Bonaparte's gulls, but for us those were remarkable enough; and if we had been five minutes later with supper . . .

Black-crowned Night Herons

It is always a satisfying, in fact an exciting experience for a bird-watcher when he sights and identifies a species new to him and makes an addition to his life list, as it is commonly called. Of course the longer he is at this game, the more infrequently does this happen. In the course of years he has seen all the birds that are classified as abundant or common or not uncommon in his district, and most of those

marked uncommon or rare. Yet for most of us there are still some rare species in our own area, and in other localities that we may visit there are probably some more not uncommon but that we just haven't spotted yet.

For instance in a couple of vacation weeks roaming the highways and byways all round the Miramichi Bay and as far north-east as Shippegan Island, I found a species that was new to me. I had stopped on a causeway across a side branch or tributary of the Tabusintac River, because usually there were ducks to be seen there. So there were, but what riveted my attention was a heron standing in one of the many channels of shallow water between the large beds of cattails. In a moment I saw that there were two more in an adjacent channel. They were brown and at first I thought bitterns. Almost immediately they rose, but only to fly over the road and down into another sheet of quiet water on the other side of the causeway. Then it struck me that their attitude standing there was not that of the American bittern, which normally points its beak upwards. I did not remember that there are other brown herons, but the moment I picked up my Peterson's *Field Guide*, which as always was on the car seat beside me, and opened it at the heron illustrations, I saw what these birds were: immature black-crowned night herons.

I was able to watch the herons for ten minutes and read up all the field marks in the book, verifying them in detail.

This is one of the many birds that show a totally different appearance in adult plumage. The mature heron has a white breast, grey wings, black back and crown.

A black-crowned night heron at last, the first I had ever seen! And then the very next day I saw two more of them in a lagoon behind sand dunes twenty miles away.

There were of course many other interesting birds. Gulls also have age differences in plumage, and in the flocks near the fish wharves of Shippegan Island there were in various stages not only herring gulls and great black-backed gulls, but many ring-billed gulls and Bonaparte's gulls.

It struck me more than ever this summer how completely swallows have come to limit themselves to places where there are, or have been, human beings. Everywhere near villages and farms there were tree and barn swallows, but the stretches of forest or blueberry barrens or sand dunes were without them. On the road from Plaster Rock to Renous, which runs eighty miles through the forest without a gas station, there were three or four groups of wooden buildings, camps that had been used by logging or pulpwood crews, but closed now and bearing "for sale" notices. At each of them I saw barn swallows, but nowhere else in all that long game refuge.

North Shore Notes

The Miramichi Bay region seems to be very favourable breeding ground for kestrels or sparrow hawks. I had only



Ruddy Turnstone

seen two or three of them all summer in the Fredericton countryside, but there were many on the North Shore. Among frequent observations, one day I saw eleven within a fifteen-mile piece of coast, five single birds, two together, and a group of four over one field.

One day I was amused by the spectacle of a line of crows perched on fence posts. It was a long wire fence dividing two hay fields, but the eight crows had selected eight posts in the middle. Each crow had a post to itself and they occupied the eight successive posts without a gap. A row of

serious; watchful crows like that on a fence has an odd, comical effect somehow.

Every little river seemed to have its resident kingfisher and three or four great blue herons, and where the streams emptied through low-tide sand or mud flats, there were usually shore birds: greater and lesser yellowlegs, ruddy turnstones, semi-palmated plovers and sandpipers, spotted and solitary sandpipers, sanderlings and black-bellied plovers.

One of the most charming hours I had was on the bank of a little side-creek of the Pokemouche River. I stopped there to eat a sandwich lunch, finding it a quiet and pleasant spot. There proved to be interesting entertainment to accompany my meal.

First some cedar waxwings attracted my attention as they used two small trees as stations from which to practise acting as kingbirds. There was an actual kingbird not far off. Then a flash of blue as a kingfisher rattled in to perch on a branch overhanging the water. Beyond him some blue-winged teal showed among the cattails, and fifty yards down a group of six black ducks swam slowly in a small open patch amid the lush growth of water weeds. Three or four tree swallows circled and swooped over the water in their ceaseless pursuit of insects.

Then a few yards farther away than the ducks I saw a pied-billed grebe at the edge of a floating carpet of light-green weed. It was feeding three young that were swimming busily without getting anywhere just inside the weed patch. The grebe swam out a few yards, dived, came up, dived again and then returned to the young birds with whatever it had brought up. I had only seen this species two or three times before, and never one with young beside it.

Sometimes you don't have to go looking for birds, they come to you instead. I had not seen a ruby-crowned kinglet at all this year, but one arrived to perch a moment on a little pine just by the window of my rented cabin. And one day at the mouth of the Rivière des Caches, at Neguac, a marsh hawk gave me, unsought, the closest look ever. I was watching some plovers and yellowlegs when I happened to

look up and glance seaward, and there was this marsh hawk flying toward me over the flat, marshy ground. It came within five yards of me, about waist-high before it wheeled and went off across the river.

In the bird books, pictures of great blue herons usually show them standing erect with their long necks bent into a sort of S shape. That's the big heron so often referred to as a crane, of course. My observation is that when you see one of them standing in shallow water patiently waiting for its prey to come within reach, it normally has its body inclined and that long thin neck stretched out in a rigid straight line at an angle of about thirty degrees from the vertical.

Thirty-seven Herons

One summer I had not been seeing many of these herons, but I spent the second half of August over on the North Shore, on vacation at Burnt Church, and some days they were numerous in the wide river mouths and on the tidal mud flats from there to Tabusintac. One afternoon I stood at low tide on a wharf at the mouth of the little Rivière des Caches, near Neguac, and counted the herons. There were, dotted about over a space of three or four hundred yards, thirty-seven of them. That's a lot of great blue herons. And every single one of them was standing with its long, very thin neck stretched out straight as a ruler at the same angle. The scene looked like an oriental painting in soft blues, greys and greens.

To wander along those sea beaches provides a good change in bird-watching as well as advantages of sea air and different scenery for a restful vacation.

Many of the species of birds were expected and familiar, including a score of different kinds of shore birds, sandpipers, plovers, dowitchers, yellowlegs and so on. I counted on seeing quantities of semipalmated plovers and black-bellied plovers and they were there. I knew there would be ruddy turnstones, and every day a few were to be seen on the beaches, true to their name as they did busily turn over small stones to seek food underneath. One day I drove to Shippegan Island, confident that Bonaparte's gulls would

be added to my vacation bird list, and sure enough by a fish wharf there was a flock of a hundred of the little gulls, a quarter of them in full summer or breeding plumage with completely black heads.

Terns were as usual more numerous than gulls along the coast from Burnt Church to Tracadie. Most of them are of the species common tern, but just once I saw a different one. Terns are hard to distinguish, for you need to see the colouring of the bill, and they fly fast over the water. You do, however, see terns resting on rocks; then you can get a good look with binoculars. So I found just one that instead of the usual orange-red bill with black tip had a bill all blood-red with no black about it, and then I knew I was watching an arctic tern. A few of these occur in that region.

Among ordinary birds that I expected to see, one species was missing. Usually any August evening near Burnt Church you can watch a score of nighthawks zigzagging overhead. That year I did not see a single nighthawk in the two weeks I was there.

On the other hand, kingfishers had been scarce in the Fredericton region too, but they were plentiful along the North Shore, a kingfisher to every river, even one to every bridge over a river.

Most of the birds, then, were familiar, but twice I came on species that were to me rarities.

One of these species I had been hoping to see for a long time, the piping plover. In the New Brunswick bird book it is called a not uncommon resident and transient, with some records, dating back about fifty years, of breeding at Tabusintac and Neguac. I had seen it once, years ago but never found any since. So it was a delight to come upon a little group of plovers one afternoon on a beach near Neguac and see that some of them were different.

Two in fact were ordinary semipalmated plovers, dark brown on top, white below, with the conspicuous black ring across the breast, black bar above a white forehead and black patch on the side of the face. The other four were very similar, but their brown backs were much paler in colour.

The books say colour of *dry* sand, whereas the semipalmated has the colour of *wet* sand, and that is a good description. Moreover, the piping plover has no dark patch on the side of the head, only the forehead bar, and the breast-band is either broken or, especially in autumn and immature plumage, very poorly defined or missing altogether. With the two species side by side I was able to compare carefully and decide that I was seeing two semipalmated and four piping plovers.

The new "Birds of Canada" book classifies the piping plover as a local summer resident or transient, and the breeding distribution map shows its area as very small and scattered. For New Brunswick the book lists Tabusintac, Neguac Beach and "probably" Miscou Island.

Hudsonian Godwits

Seeing similar species side by side is, of course, distinctly helpful to the amateur bird-watcher in identifying them. Earl Godfrey, in *The Birds of Canada*, says of the greater yellowlegs that it is "a larger edition of the lesser yellowlegs, and when, as often happens, the two are together, they are readily distinguishable by size. Otherwise size is tricky." On several occasions on this vacation I did see greater and lesser yellowlegs standing together just like illustrations in a bird book.

That brings me to an addition to my "life list", as bird-watchers call their lists of all the species they have ever seen, during the vacation. This was the Hudsonian godwit. Godwits I was *not* looking for, hadn't even thought about them until Dr. Austin Squires, who turned up at Burnt Church for a day's botanizing on Portage Island, asked me casually if I had seen any Hudsonian godwits, reminding me that these birds had been supposed near extinction earlier in the century but had been making a comeback in recent years. He saw some the next day, and I happened on three at Neguac the day after that.

If you can imagine such a contradiction in terms as a yellowlegs with bluish-grey legs, that's what a Hudsonian godwit looks like in its fall plumage. It's a grey bird then,

much the same shape and size, just a trifle larger than a greater yellowlegs, with blue-grey legs, a long, slightly upturned bill, and a black tail that contrasts sharply with a very white rump.

The godwits I saw were wading in shallow water at first, with some yellowlegs near them, then they got up and flew past quite close to me. The effect of that black-and-white tail is quite dramatic. I shall recognize Hudsonian godwits instantly if I ever see any again on a North Shore beach.

Mockingbirds At Burnt Church

Last Saturday I drove up to Burnt Church again and settled down in the cabin for a couple of weeks resting by the sea, with of course the confident hope of seeing all sorts of shore birds all along the coast from there to Shippigan Island. (This was written in August 1969.)

My first morning I took a walk by a side lane near the cottages and a couple of hundred yards along the upper road. A bird on the ridge of a barn roof attracted my attention and I focussed my attention on it. What was my astonishment to find that it was a mockingbird. And there was another one on a television aerial over the house near by.

I had already counted this a special summer when I saw the mockingbirds down at Upper Gagetown. Now here was a second pair in a different area of the province altogether.

This is going to be something very special to watch. Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Savoy showed me the nest in a tree in their garden, close to the house.

According to *The Birds of Canada* the mockingbird builds "between 4 and 20 feet up in a shrub, tree or vine. Nest is rather bulky, a loosely woven but durable cup of twigs, moss, bark strips, grass, leaves and trash, lined with rootlets and dried grass."

This nest was about eight feet up, in a quite open portion of a tree. I was shown also the remains of a first nest that the birds had begun in a bush by the fence, but had abandoned. That reminded me of the Gagetown pair, which

also got a nest built and half lined only to move away. I wondered if it is a frequent thing for mockingbirds to build tentatively in one or two locations before settling definitely on a home.

This Burnt Church nest may look to be in a rather exposed position, but it is well guarded. Mr. and Mrs. Savoy told me the mockingbirds tolerate no other birds or animals anywhere near. While I was there I watched one of them drive away a red squirrel that had incautiously ventured into a tree ten yards away. The bird attacked it, drove it up to the top of the tree and then down again. As the squirrel jumped to the ground the mockingbird dived furiously at it and proceeded to chivvy it away altogether out of the garden.

While I watched, the female sat on the nest, which had had eggs in it for several days. I hope young mockingbirds become visible while I am still here.

The Mockingbirds' Nest

The mockingbirds continue with their hatching chore. Usually just the tail of the female is to be seen sticking up from the bulky nest, and the male is never very far away. I have seen it on trees and near by, and on telephone wires two or three hundred yards down the road, but that seems to be about the limit of its patrol.

Answering my report to the New Brunswick Museum, Dr. Squires provided me with interesting information. "The breeding of the mockingbirds is very good news. The only record we had previously was an adult feeding young on Little Wood Island, Grand Manan in 1967. We have had several reports of pairs in summer which probably were breeding."

In *The Birds of Canada* this species is described as "very local permanent resident, spreading northward into Canada slowly and recently." It would be an attractive addition to our New Brunswick birds if it colonized the provinces as the evening grosbeak did not so many years ago.

Young Mockingbirds Hatched

In the middle of that week, about 20 August, the mockingbirds' eggs hatched. When I called to enquire on the Friday, Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Savoy were able to tell me that there were four young birds in the nest. The Reverend Father Grattan of Burnt Church, who has been following progress at the nest with great interest also, had been able to look inside while the birds were off, and had observed that there were four nestlings.

While I was there, the mockingbirds were continuously busy carrying insects to the nest.

There were definitely two families of mockingbirds nesting at Burnt Church. A hundred yards or so from the residence of Mr. Cecil Savoy is the home of his brother Neil. It was Mr. and Mrs. Neil Savoy who gave me information about the second pair of the birds.

Their nest was evidently in the middle of a dense thicket of young trees. It would have been a considerable disturbance to force a way through to look for a nest, so the Neil Savoy's did not attempt that. They were able to watch the adult birds carrying in supplies of insects, caterpillars and so on evidently intended for young beaks, and finally on Friday last a couple of young mockingbirds appeared in company with their parents. They soon disappeared but reappeared for a few minutes the next day.

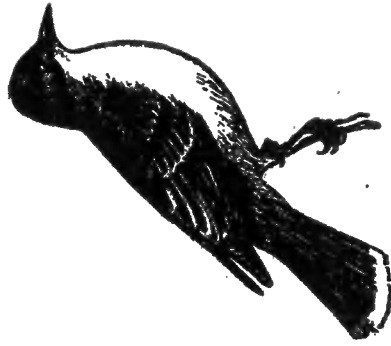
Meanwhile the pair at the Cecil Savoy's place continued to feed their young in the nest. I saw heads sticking up over the rim of the nest on Saturday. On Sunday there wasn't a sign of a young bird anywhere, the nest was empty.

When I was there one adult mockingbird was in evidence, flitting from tree to tree and scolding. What it says to an intruding spectator sounds like *zeek zeek zeek churrrrr*, *zeek zeek zeek zeek churrrrr*!

It was, I think, the male bird and the female did not put in an appearance. On Monday before I left Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Savoy told me they had on Sunday morning found the nest empty. There were two possibilities. Either the nest had

been raided by some predator and the young birds eaten, or they had reached normal growth to fly and the female had taken them into the depths of adjoining woods with much undergrowth. The nest showed no trace of disturbance, a hopeful indication.

It is an additional circumstance of interest that this very first record the New Brunswick Museum has of mockingbirds nesting in this province, laying eggs and raising young should be accompanied by observation of a second pair near by.



Eastern Kingbird

SEPTEMBER

Northern Lights

A night in early September brought us that tremendous spectacle, a display of the northern lights.

There is surely nothing more strangely, mysteriously beautiful in nature than the northern lights with their shifting curtains of eerie light, one moment concentrated in two or three slender pillars of blue-white fire, the next spread out all across two thirds of the sky in a shimmering, arched curtain, soon dissolving into a fast-moving procession of spears of light never still for more than a few seconds, and always awe-inspiring in the majestic sweep of illumination on so vast a scale.

As I watched this display of the lights I was inevitably reminded of a night many years ago when I saw a strangely dramatic exhibition of two of the great spectacles of the sky going on simultaneously: northern lights and a thunderstorm. It was the only time in my life I ever saw these two phenomena together. A professional meteorologist once informed me that certain combinations of weather factors may produce the conjuncture on occasion, but only very rarely.

It was on the New Brunswick coast of the Bay of Chaleur that I stood beside a tent and saw across the water northern lights and lightning, a summer night but intensely dark. Nothing was visible on the waters of the bay except in the brief illuminations of the terrific lightning flashes, and then a schooner under sail showed up, one slight, beautiful element of human creation in the midst of the vast scene of nature's splendour.

Afterwards I wrote a piece of verse in which I tried to describe what I watched that night.

SAILS BY NIGHT

A void of darkness hid the Bay's expanse;
The Gaspé Hills beyond but hinted at a blacker bar,
Velvet, opaque,

Foundation for an arch of softest light
Glowing in pale, slow radiance;
Fit floor to bear Aurora's flashing dance.

The northern sky, awake,
Alive with shifting, frigid, turquoise fire,
Shimmered in glory, building height on height
Of slender, soaring spire
Towards the stillness of the polar star.

North-west the lightning flared,
Flash after shuddering flash;
Dark miles of cloud in lurid masses bared
Their jagged outlines, as with urgent glow
The pulsing floodlight glare within divided plane
From plane of angry grey and indigo;
The downward stabbing strokes, in flash and flash again,
Etched river maps in living fire against the duns
And blues of clouds and falling rain;
There came no thunder crash,
Each vivid lightning blaze revealed,
In momentary bright array,
A space of glittering, ghostly waves,
Silent and still as though by sudden light congealed;

And in the midst, a magic silhouette,
Close-hauled a schooner sailed, with all her canvas set
To catch the offshore breeze.

—The fisherman in such a vessel braves
Daily the pounding seas.—
Built for plain use, the ship in that strange night became
A jewel wrought in platinum and jet,
And there, beneath the quivering sky's immense display
Of northern lights and thunderstorm's forked flame,
In thrilling beauty held her course along the bay.

Birds on Fall Migration

To come back to things on a less overpowering scale, but still in the field of nature, this is the time through September and October, to watch specially for migrating birds on their way south. At the edges of the woods you may find white-crowned sparrows, for instance, and tree sparrows and fox sparrows. In bushes and small trees on the river banks and in the corners of the fields there should be warblers. Along the shores of lakes and rivers a variety of wading birds may be observed: yellowlegs both greater and lesser; sandpipers of a number of different species, plovers, sanderlings and so on.

Many of these birds may be seen along the edge of the water in Fredericton's Devon Park between the highway bridge and the railway bridge. In just a few minutes the other day, in a quick visit in the lunch hour, I saw two herons, a little company of black ducks, some herring gulls, a solitary sandpiper, some least and semipalmated sandpipers, three semipalmated plovers, one killdeer and four or five sanderlings.

The sanderling is interesting: it's a small, plump sandpiper, as Peterson's description puts it, seven to eight and a half inches long. It has a flashing white stripe in the wing that is always there, but the most of its plumage changes. In spring it is buff or rusty colour about the head and breast, but has those parts white in the fall, so much so that it has been nicknamed "whitey".

An addition to the New Brunswick list of birds was made recently when in that area between the Fredericton bridges Mr. Peter Pearce came upon a buff-breasted sandpiper. The mass migration of this species is through the prairies, and only a few rare wanderers come through the Atlantic provinces. This was the first one recorded with definite identification in New Brunswick.

Down river a few days earlier I had been pleased to find some migrating warblers. In fact I had been wondering if the population of these brightly coloured little birds had been subject to disaster. In the spring I had seen only six species of warblers, and very few of them. Afterwards I saw only two or three, weeks apart. So it was a reassuring thing to see myrtle warblers in half a dozen places in one afternoon, and to find flitting about in a single bush on the river bank a yellow warbler, a yellowthroat, a Nashville and two myrtles with flashing yellow rumps.

Fall Birds in Country and City

September has a habit of providing spells of beautiful weather in the Maritimes, a wonderful time to get out and enjoy the sunshine in the open air. On one weekend drive it was evident that fall had begun. Here and there the trees glowed scarlet or pale yellow, but it was still early fall and the bright colours showed against a green background.

Bird life gave evidence of the season. On a drive down river by Mauderville to Lower Jemseg and over to Gagetown, for instance, there were fewer birds. The swallows had gone. There did not seem to be many grackles or crows or redwings. Maybe some of these are already on their way south, or maybe they have just temporarily shifted their feeding grounds. There will be more of them yet as flocks from farther north pass this way.

On the other hand there were more ducks in the river and a hummingbird was evidence that fall was still in its first days.

I saw the hummingbird in the riverside garden of the Melvin Moores when I visited them in Gagetown. There were other interesting things there, too. A small company

of robins, most of them young birds in their black-spotted plumage, were feeding on red berries of the rowan, or mountain ash. There are three trees there, all loaded with berries, and Melvin told me the robins move from one tree to another on each of their visits, but always in the same order, the tree by the water, then the one by the fence on the down-river side, and finally the third one nearer the house, never the other way round. Creatures of habit evidently.

There was a myrtle warbler that seemed a bird of enquiring and experimental turn of mind. It explored a low shingle roof as though looking for holes. Then it flew down under the roof overhang and tried to perch on the top of a window. It found no foothold, so it flew out a couple of yards and tried again from a different angle. No good. Back up to the ridge of the roof. Then it perched on the lower part of a plastic clothesline, about eight feet from the pulley. It looked up then at the line from the top of the pulley, parallel six or seven inches above. That evidently challenged the myrtle. It suddenly flew out and up, looped the loop over the upper line and back to precisely the same position on the lower wire. I could not help thinking that the manoeuvre had been a game, an experimental circus trick.

Some chickadees arrived and Melvin told me they had been coming daily for a week. Last year not a chickadee showed up until after Christmas. The difference might be caused by failure of some source of food supply in the seasonal succession.

All along the river there were black ducks, two here, a dozen there, five half a mile farther down. Blue-winged teal showed up at one point, a flock of a couple of dozen of them. Once I was surprised to see a solitary Canada goose swimming.

A week ago several Fredericton bird-watchers had the unusual experience of seeing a Baird's sandpiper on the river shore in Devon Park. That is a very rare bird in this province. The mass migration of the species is through the middle of the continent and the prairies. All of them take that route in spring, and most of them go back the same way

in the fall, but just small numbers move southwards by coastal regions, east and west. So it is something quite remarkable when one turns up here.

The river bank on the Devon side between the highway bridge and the railroad bridge often has at this time of year an interesting variety of birds. The evening I went over there to look for the Baird's sandpiper, on a tip from Mr. Peter Pearce of the federal wildlife service, I found it in company with four or five pectoral sandpipers and two semipalmated sandpipers, and twenty yards along the beach was a semipalmated plover.

Just beyond the boundary of the park a great blue heron stood motionless in the shallow water. For good measure there were also present several herring gulls and half a dozen ducks. That is really a remarkable collection of birds to see in a city park.

A Swimming Bat

One Monday evening I was on the river bank in Devon Park, looking for shore birds, when I saw a very strange occurrence.

About a yard out from the edge, something stirred violently in the water. It heaved to the surface, went under again, came up again a few inches nearer. A dark thing, two or three inches across, but I could not make out what it was. I supposed it might be some sort of frog, perhaps crippled by injury, so I went to the water's edge to look closer.

A queer-looking creature emerged, standing probably on sunken weeds, and for a moment it resembled some monstrous, bloated spider with two disproportionate long legs in front, jointed high over its body.

The thing moved forward, slid off whatever it had been standing on and was for a moment completely submerged again. Finally it came to the surface once more and managed to scramble up on the lower foliage of some strong plants growing out of the water at that spot.

Then I saw that the creature had a head with ears and that its very long front limbs, jointed in the middle, spread a membrane to the sides of its body. It was a bat!

Its next move was typical bat behaviour, for it climbed six or eight inches up the weeds and hung itself up on a leaf stem.

There were frequent waves coming in, wash from passing motorboats, and I thought it possible that such a wave might have been the cause of the bat's having to struggle for its life in the water. Perhaps it had been skimming in pursuit of insects only an inch or two above the surface, or maybe drinking on the wing as bats do, when a wave had hit it and rolled it under.

Where the bat had suspended itself, only a hand's breadth clear of the water, seemed to me an unsafe position for it. Another wave might wash it off the weed. So I picked up a big curved piece of bark and a small stick and scooped the little animal off its plant, carried it across the beach and put it down again at the foot of some tall weeds at the edge of the grass.

The bat scrambled up a stem and again hung itself up to dry. The most helpful course then seemed to be to leave it to rest and recover naturally. I hope it was later able to fly off.

Ploughed Fields For Plovers

One September, word came that a dozen American golden plovers had been observed in a ploughed field beside the road to the ferry at Lower Jemseg. It was several days before I could get down there to look, but when I did the birds were still in the same place.

This plover is very like the black-bellied plover, but the top of its head is dark, making the white from the forehead down the side of the neck distinct; tail and rump are dark instead of whitish; and in flight the black-bellied shows black axillars, or "armpits," where the golden has grey.

These golden plovers would be feeding up, I suppose, in the leisurely early stages of migration before a long hop for South America.

The migrations of the golden plover cover an enormous range of territory. It breeds in northern, arctic Canada, Alaska and Siberia. It winters in South America from Bolivia to central Argentina, and also in India, China and as

far south as Australia and New Zealand. Here in New Brunswick it is classed as a rare fall transient. The golden plover is in fact one of the species with alternative routes: the main migration in spring takes it north through the middle of the continent and across the prairies, but in the fall a considerable number take a southward line east of Hudson's Bay and through the Atlantic coastal area.

Also foraging for food, with evident success, in that Lower Jemseg cultivated field were a score of killdeer. That was a common enough sight when I lived in Ontario, but I had not seen so many together more than a couple of times in the past twenty years in this province.

It's a bird the beginning bird-watcher could not possibly mistake, for it is the plover with two sharply defined black bands across the white breast, and all other "ringed" plovers have a single black band only.

In the same field with the two species of plovers I saw also half a dozen water pipits. These birds are among the species seen in New Brunswick only as passing travellers in spring and fall.

The water pipit, also called the American pipit, is a sparrow-sized brownish bird with dark breast streaks and a thin bill. In flight it shows white outer tail feathers.

Though they nest among vegetation and under rocks, the water pipits on migration have a decided preference for bare, open ground, and a ploughed field is just the place to find them. It needs luck too, for they are not common in our area.

Robie Tufts, in his Nova Scotia bird book, writes of the water pipit: "Few amateur 'bird-watchers' know this bird by sight. This is partly because its habitat is more or less remote from the beaten paths, for which reason it is apt to be overlooked during its relatively short stay in spring and fall. Furthermore, it is so decidedly terrestrial in its habits that when the beginner does happen to stumble on a small flock quietly feeding most unobtrusively on the ground, they immediately spring into the air as one bird . . . hurry off in loose formation, so quickly that he is given no chance to note . . . distinctive marks."

Those I saw at Lower Jemseg, however, were easy to watch, for I had been standing still for some time observing the golden plovers when the pipits arrived, walking along the ground closer to me. It's one of their field marks, by the way, that they do walk or run, they don't hop. So I was able to have a good look at them with the binoculars.

Oak Tree Feast

On a Saturday morning the sunshine suggested that another walk in the Odell Park should be a pleasant thing, so that's where we went. Before the ramble ended, it had proved not only a fine day for enjoying the sunny, colour-splashed woods, but remarkable for bird-watching.

There had been a lot of birds lately in the neighbourhood of the army garage, so we went round that way first. Most in evidence were olive-backed thrushes, seven or eight of them here and there in the bushes. There were flickers, several white-throated sparrows — though nothing like the flock we had seen there a few days earlier — a catbird and a redstart. Two little red squirrels played on and around a tree stump. Overhead passed a blue jay, several crows and a little company of cedar waxwings.

Then we moved up the hill, seeing a song sparrow and some goldfinches on the way.

Near one of the picnic tables there was a bird on the trunk of a young oak tree, and my wife said: "There's a sapsucker, isn't it?" We both put field-glasses on it and watched the yellow-bellied sapsucker doing just what its name implies: feasting on sap. We went nearer.

The bark was punched with a band of holes and the sap was oozing from them, in places running down. The sapsucker went on feeding quietly. A little bird came down from a branch above and joined him, taking sap from the other side of the four-inch-thick trunk. It was a blue-headed vireo. It went off after a minute and promptly a hummingbird arrived. It too set about feeding on the sap, moving methodically as it hovered in a blur of wings from hole to hole.

We went very slowly nearer and nearer, finally stopping just about four feet from the tree. Just above our heads the birds went on eating, the hummingbird at times within two inches of the sapsucker, which took absolutely no notice of it. The hummingbird darted away after two or three minutes and the vireo came back. Then the sapsucker must have noticed us, I think, and the birds flew off.

It was only to a maple ten yards away, though. We tried a finger-smear of the sap and found it had a faint sweetish taste. Then we moved away four or five yards and the sapsucker promptly came back. This time he was joined by a couple of myrtle warblers.

We sat down by the picnic table, and the performance went on. It was now a sort of ballet of combinations, danced by two hummingbirds, three myrtle warblers, the sapsucker and the vireo. Sometimes there were three birds, a warbler or a vireo with a hummingbird and the sapsucker all at once within two or three inches of each other at the slender tree trunk, sometimes two.

A flicker came down and sat on a little branch, a yard to one side of the welling holes in the oak bark, but he did not go for the sap, just observed, seemingly, in motionless silence what the other birds were doing.

We watched, entranced, for three-quarters of an hour.

On the way home there were evening grosbeaks and robins, which have, as noted last week, again become numerous.

In the afternoon we went back for another look. The birds were still busy at the oak sap. There were two sapsuckers alternating at the tree now, with three myrtle warblers and the two hummingbirds returning every five or six minutes from excursions among other trees and bushes. The vireo did not show up, but his place was taken by a Cape May warbler, bright in his yellow and black "tiger stripes."

On Sunday we were again in Odell Park and were entertained to another repeat performance. All the players appeared except the watching flicker, whose role was enacted by an understudy: a white-breasted nuthatch.

In the oak tree, then moving to other perches without displaying any interest in the sap banquet, we saw also two rose-breasted grosbeaks. The hummingbirds are unusually late for this area, and these grosbeaks two weeks beyond the latest date noted in *Birds of New Brunswick*. It was, in fact, a thrilling weekend for two bird-watchers.

Rare Gulls Visit Fredericton

One evening Mr. Andrew Dean, then secretary of the Fredericton Field Naturalists Club, telephoned me with news of very unusual gulls in the river by Waterloo Row. He had seen there a laughing gull in company with several ring-billed gulls. Several other experienced observers had looked at the birds and confirmed the identification.

This seemed to me quite remarkable and I began to look things up in the books. In *The Birds of New Brunswick* I found the ring-billed gull classed as "uncommon transient", with some September records for the North Shore and an opinion that probably all that visit us come from the breeding colonies of Saguenay County, Quebec. Taverner's *Birds of Canada* says the species is common on the coasts in migration, and that inland, as on the Great Lakes, it competes in numbers with the more familiar herring gull.

In places where the herring gull is common, the ring-billed might well be taken for one. Its appearance is very much the same but it is a bit smaller, 18 to 20 inches instead of 23 to 25. It has yellowish or greenish legs instead of the flesh-coloured or pink of the herring gull, and it has a black ring round the bill near the tip. Such differences are often hard to see, but the immature or first-year birds have a further distinguishing mark. The ring-billed has a narrow black band across the tail near the end, quite sharp against the white background. Several of the ring-billed gulls in the river last week showed this inch-wide black bar very distinctly indeed.

(That is first-hand observation. Naturally after hearing of these gulls it was urgent to go next day to look, and by good fortune they were still there.)

The laughing gull is listed by Mr. Squires in his book as a "very rare summer resident" in New Brunswick. In this Fredericton area I suppose it could only be called an "accidental". Peterson's *Field Guide* says it breeds on grassy islands on the Atlantic coast from Nova Scotia to Texas and is "casual" inland.

The laughing gull is one of several species that in spring and summer plumage have black heads, but in fall and winter only dark spots or suffusions on the head. It is rather smaller again than the ring-billed, $15\frac{1}{2}$ to 17 inches. The immature bird is a "small dark gull with a white rump"; and in all stages of plumage the laughing gulls have a white rear edge to their wings.

The laughing gull is so named because of its voice, which is, according to Peterson, "a high strident laugh, *ha-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba*"; unfortunately nothing amused it while we were looking at the gulls, so I am unable to confirm that.

It seems possible that the disturbance of the recent hurricane may have had something to do with the appearance of these gulls in so unusual a locality. Storms often do set migrating birds astray.

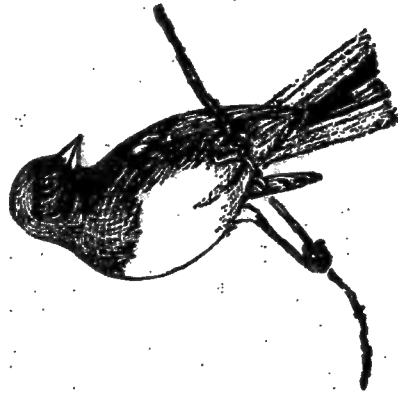
Other Bird Notes

In the past few weeks numbers of flickers have been about. Someone asked me the other day if there was any kind of woodpecker that hunted food on the ground as well as on trees. The flicker is the answer. This is the brown-backed woodpecker with a conspicuous white rump showing as it flies, a red patch on the nape, and a wide black crescent mark across the breast. Half of its food consists of ants.

The redwings have been gathering in their big flocks for migration. Near Sheffield we saw what seemed like five divisions of a single army go over the road from the trees and bushes of the river bank in quick succession. There must have been two or three hundred birds in each group, so that was well over a thousand redwings in less than a minute.

In the Odell Park one September 15 we watched a fox sparrow on a bush at close quarters, not more than a dozen feet away, for several minutes. This was very early. According to the book it had been noted on a September 20 date, but is not usually seen before mid-October. This bird is a transient in our province, breeding north of the St. Lawrence and going down to the southern half of the United States for the winter. It's a big sparrow, more heavily streaked on the breast than the others, and it has a "bright rufous-red tail" that is quite conspicuous.

We saw some young Blackburnian warblers near Taymouth on Saturday and a spruce grouse near Cross Creek.



Slate-coloured Junco

OCTOBER

An Imperturbable Heron

On a brilliant October day there were not so many birds to be seen on a leisurely country drive, but still we counted a score of species. There were numerous blue jays and twice we saw Canada jays. Crows were to be found in the fields everywhere, and there were a number of ravens. Little flocks of chipping sparrows flitted among roadside weeds and bushes, and at the edge of many a wood the familiar flashing white feathers of the juncos' tails made them conspicuous.

At one spot a heron's behaviour amused us. We looked down from the road on the hillside between Taymouth and Stanley and saw the big bird in a very small stream, a six-foot wide brook through the fields below us. There was a tree-trunk across it at one point, a solid log about twenty feet long apparently, that must have been laid as a foot-bridge on some path through the meadow. The heron was advancing very slowly, one deliberate foot at a time, up the brook towards the tree-trunk and we wondered what he would do when he came to it. Lift himself on big wings over it or turn back?

Apparently the heron found it not worth while to set about flying for a mere breast-high log, nor was he ready to retrace his way. Instead he turned and, still with the intently slow, deliberate steps, walked up on the bank, round the seven-foot portion of the trunk that lay on the ground, and back along the other side to go down into the water again, resuming his up-stream hunt immediately above the barrier.

There are many flickers about, mostly in family groups of three or four, and every few miles a sparrow hawk hovers overhead.

Only at one place did we see a couple of robins.

Hard-working Woodpecker

The most interesting bird-watching note during one October week was provided by a pileated woodpecker. This seems to be a hard-working bird, bent on taking every advantage of a good source of food when found.

This specimen was busy on a tree where we had watched two of them eighteen months ago. The tree is half-dead, and long vertical troughs have been gouged out in the rotting trunk by these birds. The holes have to be seen to be believed, they measure about four inches wide, four or five inches deep and three or four feet from top to bottom.

It was a fine sight to watch the big woodpecker—crow-size, of course, "coloured in broad masses of black and white and with a conspicuous, pointed, brilliant red crest"—working away just about a yard above our heads as we stood ten or twelve feet from its tree.

Taverner wrote of its feeding, as it "visits rotten logs . . . and, with its powerful bill, tears and scatters them about in fragments for the grubs contained . . . Its principal value is that of a forest conservator, and it should be protected for economic as well as aesthetic reasons."

The chips being scattered by the particular pileated woodpecker we watched were mostly an inch and a half to two inches across, and half an inch thick!

Its persistence in making a thorough job was shown by the fact that we saw it at the same tree on two successive evenings.

Mid-October Days

On one of those marvellous evenings of warm sunshine that make our mid-October so enchanting, we were driving through Maugerville in the up-river direction. The setting sun was a vast disk of scarlet only a little space above the horizon, and its reflection, an elongated patch of equally fiery red, extended just a short way over the glassy surface of the great river from the dark bank on the far side.

Then we noticed a curious optical illusion. It must often happen with such a conjunction of sunset, still water and observers in a moving car. The patch of blazing red on the water moved steadily along the bank as we looked at it, keeping pace, naturally, with our modest speed.

We watched this horizontally-rushing sunset for a mile or two, as it sped past the darkly-silhouetted trees and the patches of reeds below.

Once we stopped for a while when we spotted ducks in the water. The sunset stopped with us, and then its red reflection made a wonderful picture with a score of golden-eyes swimming and diving in the middle of the river.

We put up the revolving feed-table in the garden, to let the birds get accustomed to it again before winter. A handful of scratch-feed went into it, and a score of peanuts, threaded like beads on a thin string, hung from the perch.

It did not take the blue jays more than minutes to get used to that, and find the way to deal with the suspended nuts.

When half a dozen nuts have been eaten, the rest swing several inches below the perch. It would be difficult for anything but a chickadee to get at one directly, but a blue jay has his answer to the problem.

He perches on the woodwork, leans down until he is almost upside-down himself. Then he grabs the string in the middle with his beak and hauls it up as he rights himself. He puts the bight of the twine under one foot and repeats the process. Now he has a peanut by his foot, hard against the flat wooden perch, where he can hammer at it with a speed and precision that a woodpecker could hardly excel.

Once a shell is smashed and the nut extracted, that too is held by a foot while it is pecked into sizes suitable for swallowing. The whole process is fascinating to watch from a window eight feet away.

Uncommon Birds Observed

One October Sunday Mr. Peter Pearce telephoned to tell me he had just been watching a coot in the river by Devon Park. Naturally I drove down there immediately to see if I could see this uncommon bird too.

When I got there and walked over to the little bay just above the railway bridge, I did not find it at first. Six black ducks rose and went flying off across the river somewhere. A few minutes later two great blue herons arrived, braked to a stop with spread wings and alighted gently in the shallow water. It was beginning to rain then, but I waited and watched for another ten minutes, and finally I spotted the coot swimming briskly, away out under the bridge.

The American coot is a rather duck-like bird, about fifteen inches long, dark slate-grey with a whitish bill, and a white patch under the tail. It belongs to the rail family, but does not, like the rest of them, always skulk among the cat-tails. The coot swims in open water. It is not, however, a web-footed bird. Instead, all its toes are fringed with flaps or lobes. A good "field mark" is its vigorous pumping back and forth of head and neck while swimming.

Another uncommon bird seen in the neighbourhood recently was a red-headed woodpecker observed by Mr. Melvin Moore and Mr. Peter Pearce on different days in the vicinity of Gagetown.

This is a very rare woodpecker in the Maritimes, its normal range extending only to southern New England. It is about the size of a hairy woodpecker, but with a more striking colour pattern. Its entire head is bright red; underparts white; tail, wings and back black, with large square white patches on the wings. The sexes are alike, but young birds have a dusky brown head instead of the adult red.

The Ways of Squirrels

One October day I watched with interest as a grey squirrel busied itself harvesting butternuts from a tree. It was a complicated process. Many nuts were shaken down to lie on the grass beneath the tree, but some the animal carried down to place beside them. Now and then it went off somewhere into an orchard with a large nut, which was undoubtedly buried for possible later use. Sometimes it made two such expeditions before returning to the upper branches to resume shaking.

After a while the squirrel must have felt the need for a change; for it went off, but it returned to the tree, I was told, many days for more nuts. This was most convenient for the owners of the property, who happen to have a liking for butternuts too. They were saved all the trouble of putting up ladders or shaking the tree themselves. All they had to do was go out with a basket after each of the squirrel's visits and pick up what they wanted.

Squirrels provide endless entertainment for human observers. Their movements are so sudden, swift and supremely graceful, and they have such a quaint air when they sit up motionless, looking sideways to observe the observer.

It is not difficult, with the aid of a bag or two of peanuts, to establish friendly relations with a squirrel. One summer in Ontario a squirrel used to come in through a window purposely left open and join us at, or rather on, the table for most of our meals through a period of weeks. On the table it rambled round, selecting just what it preferred from the dishes. I remember that it liked all dry breakfast cereals, some cooked vegetables, and cake. And of course most days there just happened to be a little bowl with a few nuts on the table, in case of visitors with a fancy for such things.

It was from that guest that I first learnt that a contented squirrel, like a contented cat, has the odd habit of purring, steadily and quite loudly, to express its satisfaction.

That squirrel, by the way, was black, not gray. The black is not a different species, but just a colour variation. Where we lived, at Port Hope on the lake shore between

Kingston and Toronto, nine out of ten of the grey squirrels were in fact wholly black.

Another squirrel that lived with us for most of a summer, at first in the safety of a cage and later in free association, was a young animal that suffered the effects of a miscalculation of strength on the part of its mother. We had a disused chimney on the house, reached by the squirrels in three stages of roof, garage, kitchen and second floor, with a final vertical ascent up what must have been four or five feet of brickwork. In the chimney a squirrel built a nest and reared her young.

We watched for several days when little squirrels began to come out and run about the projecting ledge of brick that ornamented the top of the chimney. Trouble came when the mother squirrel decided, too early, to bring one down, perhaps to let it romp more freely on the roof. After a while she set about getting it back into the nest, carrying it in her mouth. That was all right on the roof, but then came the vertical rush up the brick chimney. She could not make it with her burden. Time after time she took the youngster by the scruff of the neck, ran fast along the roof and up the side of the chimney, but with no success. The weight was too much for her to get more than two-thirds of the way up before she had to drop back.

After many attempts she gave up and abandoned the young squirrel. It made its way down after a time to the porch, where for its protection from cats and dogs we captured it and put it in a box. It grew up successfully in a large cage we borrowed, but even when it was on the porch and its parent accepting a hand-out of peanuts a couple of yards away, there was never any recognition. The other youngsters were much bigger when the mother brought them down a week later, and the family went off somewhere in the trees without any attempt to return to the chimney.

Twice I have observed that squirrels share another characteristic with domestic cats, besides purring when happy. If a mother squirrel takes a dislike to a nest position half way through bringing up a family, she will transport the kittens, one at a time, to a new location. One of the moves I watched was made by an Ontario black squirrel. The nest

was in a deserted pigeon house. When the little squirrels began to show themselves in the entrance, a dog observed them and spent some time barking up the supporting pole. Choosing a time when the dog was not about, that squirrel brought her young down one at a time — there were four of them — and carried each in turn along the top of about seventy feet of post and rail fence and up over a shed to a hole in the roof of a neighbour's house.

The other squirrel home-changing I watched was here in Fredericton, when a grey squirrel took her young ones from a nest in what were then the grounds of Alexander College, out into Wilmot Park and fifty yards along Rookwood Avenue, where she disappeared behind a house.

On each of these occasions I observed that after a lengthy job of carrying, with pauses to rest or eat on the way back for the next, the squirrel did not come back after moving the last of three or four young. She must have had in fact some sense of number, or of recognition of her family when it was complete, and did not need to go back to check if another might still be waiting.

In New Brunswick we have four species of squirrels. That's counting the woodchuck or ground hog, though personally I seldom remember that it too is zoologically a squirrel. The northern flying squirrel is the least known, for it is nocturnal in habit and very few ever see one. The little red squirrel of the woods is very familiar, of course, not only in its appearance but also for its loud ratchet-rattle scolding when it sees something of which it does not approve.

The eastern grey squirrel, the one I have been talking about, is much bigger than the red. It has been known in the St. John River valley for more than a century and in recent years it has been seen at Moncton and Bathurst. That marks the north-eastern limit of its geographical range.



Rough-legged Hawk

NOVEMBER

Blue Jays In A Garden

These birds seem to display a curious mixture of caution and boldness. Two of them have been coming fairly regularly, sometimes singly but more often in company, to our feed table. When peanuts are there, evidently these are preferred over all other food, but the birds vary their diet with whatever is on offer—bread, other nuts, chicken feed, suet.

The table is close to the house, about ten feet from the kitchen window. You see a flash of bright, gorgeous blue and a jay flies in without the slightest hesitation. Clearly he knows exactly where he is going, and is confident he will find there something to eat.

Then as he alights on the perch of the tray, caution and suspicion seize him. He looks to the right, does a hop turn and gazes to the left. He moves towards the food, then apparently remembers he hasn't looked on the other side, so he flutters on to the top of the little roof over the food for a scouting look around, comes back to the perch, looks once more to the left and finally sidesteps to the other end to

make utterly sure. Only then does he start to gobble peanuts or select a chunk of bread to be taken to the top of the tallest tree in a neighbour's garden.

Once he begins on the nuts, the surroundings are forgotten. He takes one, raises his head, works the mouthful down in three or four swallows, stabs for another nut. I have watched and counted as eleven bits went down in steady rhythm without pause, about two seconds to the nut.

"Select" is the right word when a blue jay decides to enjoy a piece of bread. Quite often he will pick up and discard four or five before making a choice of which one to fly off with.

Very often the blue jays stop in the trees twenty yards away, before coming down to the feed tray, and announce their arrival with piercing shrieks.

Once or twice a Canada jay has come along with the two blue jays, his sober garb in contrast to the spectacular, vivid blue and white of his friends.

Rough-Legged Hawks

The fields and woods have a peaceful aspect in November, quiet grays and browns in the sunshine, yet with an incredible variety in the varying shades of brown. Bird life, though, is something come upon only at intervals of a few miles.

On a circuit by the Royal Road to Stanley and back by the Nashwaak valley, we found little flocks of evening grosbeaks at several places, sometimes in company with redpolls and at other times with pine siskins. All are regular winter inhabitants.

It was that evening a telephone call from Mr. Peter Pearce advised an expedition down river, where he had seen three rough-legged hawks; they might be still there the next day.

So they were, down below McGowan's Corner and not far from the Upper Gagetown ferry.

This hawk, uncommon in New Brunswick, has two colour phases, light and dark, and both were there. A dark one perched on a small tree was the first we sighted,

and by the time we had stopped the car and got out it had disappeared, but a light-phase bird was just moving off from the trees.

It put on a wonderful display for us. The American rough-legged hawk is of the buteo or buzzard type, those with broad wings and broad, rounded tail, and it's a big hawk, 20 to 23 inches long. The books say, to help in recognition, "this is the only eastern Buteo that habitually hovers with beating wings, kingfisher-like, or like an osprey, in one spot." So the rough-leg we were watching hovered, fifty yards away and fifty feet up. (Similarly the sparrow hawk, a falcon, is "the only common *small* hawk that habitually hovers on rapidly beating wings.")

In the *Field Guide*, too, the description of the rough-legged hawk read: "The tail is white with a broad black band at the end." The hovering hawk turned a little from the sideview it had presented, and spent the next half-minute with its back to us, as though specially to afford a good view of the tail pattern. Then it moved over to the far side of the fields.

The rough-legged hawk, so called because of the feathered legs, lives mainly on mice and grasshoppers, so it's a useful bird in agricultural areas. "Arctic; winters from southern edge of Canada to northern Carolina, Louisiana and Texas."

It is an odd thing that during their winter stay, almost all the rough-legged hawks seen down river are found between McGowan's Corner and Upper Gagetown ferry. The normal distribution seems to be: from Fredericton to McGowan's Corner, no rough-legs; between there and the ferry or the county line, a number of the birds, maybe up to a dozen; farther down river in Jemseg or Lower Jemseg perhaps the odd one or two. The favoured area must, I suppose, be the richest in mice.

Rough-legged hawks have a habit of sitting on a tree branch on the river bank, as close as twenty or thirty feet to the road, apparently just watching the traffic go by. If you drive very slowly, you can get a fine view of such a bird from your car, but when you stop, intending to look a little longer, the hawk takes off deliberately and moves away.

That has the advantage, though, that you can see then the pattern of white in the tail and underside of the body and wings.

Selective Location

In November it is natural to find birds here and there instead of everywhere. But what causes their choice of here rather than there?

On a drive by Jemseg to Cambridge and back, it struck me on the way down that there were more ducks in the river by Maugerville than there had been earlier in the month. They were all goldeneyes, and scattered about, but putting groups together, three, six, one, fifteen and so on they added up to about forty ducks swimming and diving. After I passed the parish boundary line, I did not see another duck, but the goldeneyes were still there at Maugerville when I came back.

A mile or two below the Upper Gagetown ferry I saw some little birds in the trees and bushes of the river bank and down at the edge of the road, so I stopped and got out to look. Four or five slate-coloured juncos were the little things picking up gravel, and when they flew up into the branches I saw that there were also black-capped chickadees there.

On a low limb a red squirrel sat watching me intently. He was silent for several minutes, then began to make rasping remarks, not in a continuous chatter but at regular intervals of five seconds or so. It was not clear whether he was expressing his opinion of me or of the chickadees swinging upside down from twigs a couple of feet from his head.

On the other side of the road just there a wire fence dividing fields made two corners that were filled with low shrubs and a tangle of undergrowth. Movement there attracted my attention and I walked across the road for a closer look at more small birds. These proved to be white-crowned sparrows.

That made three species of small birds in a fifty-yard square. Hours later, on the way home, I stopped at the same spot to look if they were still there. They were not, but the

count was raised to five species by the appearance of two song sparrows and two tree sparrows.

I did not see any small birds for several miles each side of that field corner, but there were dozens of apparently similar small patches of bushes and high weeds. Why was that particular spot so specially attractive to the small birds?

An hour in the Odell Park on a November Sunday proved lucky, for we saw birds of five species, and one was unusual.

There was a red-breasted nuthatch on one tree and a downy woodpecker on another not far off, early in the ramble. We heard the screeching of blue jays, and a little later two of them flew across a clearing. Along one of the trails a dozen black-capped chickadees were flitting restlessly from branch to branch.

The prize of the morning, however, was a flock of ruby-crowned kinglets. The first we came upon were high up and we could not be quite sure. Then after a while we met a whole flock, thirty or forty of them, down on bushes and low tree-branches at the side of a roadway. We were able to watch them at close range and at eye-level with the glasses for ten minutes before they vanished.

Kinglets are like that. You have maybe been wandering along without sight of a bird for an hour and suddenly the trees are full of them. They flit about with busy restlessness, like chickadees only more so. Then suddenly they aren't there any more. They've moved on to some other clump of trees with the abruptness of a conjuring trick.

The kinglets are tiny birds, warbler-size; head and neck smooth, yellowish-green or olive, whiteish below, white wingbars on dark wings. Only the male has the red patch on the crown, and often it does not show. None of the birds we watched had any sign of the red, but the species can be distinguished from the other that comes here, the golden-crowned, by the absence of a stripe above the eyes.

By the book, ruby-crowned kinglets are not uncommon summer residents, but are usually gone before October is out, so these seen near the end of November may have set a new "late date". Many birds seem to be staying later into the fall in recent years.

As well as all these birds, there were a number of red squirrels. We saw at least six, once a party of three apparently playing games high up in some trees, and the scolding ratchet noise they make was to be heard all over the place.

Geese and Ducks in November

On a late Sunday of November I was driving down the river road, as I so often do, towards Jemseg. At Manguerville I saw a number of goldeneye ducks swimming and diving in their characteristic fashion. This species is extremely hardy and in the depths of winter you may come upon a few anywhere that a patch of open water occurs, as for instance over a spring that bubbles up from the bottom of the river.

One November day at Manguerville I saw the canvas-back duck observed earlier by Mr. Peter Pearce, who told me that at the weekend this very rare duck was seen again in the Fredericton stretch of the river.

A few miles farther down, but before I reached the Upper Gagetown ferry, I stopped in sudden surprise when I saw a long procession of Canada geese swimming slowly upstream. In the fall and early winter the big geese are always, to me at least, unexpected. It's different in the spring. Everybody is waiting for the birds then, and old-timers in the country remark that they always used to expect the geese about St. Patrick's Day, they come later in these times. In my notebook it's generally a date in April when I see a few for the first time. Then they build up in numbers, and big flocks are seen in Grand Lake and on the pastures in the Lower Jemseg area, where they stick around for weeks. So you get used to seeing thousands in an afternoon's drive. More than once last spring I stood on one spot by the roadside and counted until I got well above four hundred in sight. No surprise in seeing Canada geese then.

Then of course one weekend there just aren't any. They've all taken off for their breeding grounds in the north, and for four or five months not a goose is to be seen.

In the fall it's not like that at all. One day I suddenly see a long V-formation flying across the sky, and then maybe not another observation for a couple of weeks. Then it may

be a little flock in the river somewhere, or just the wild music of geese honking as they fly over at night. Several flocks may be seen in the course of a couple of days, then another gap. No lengthy stop-over, no build-up of great numbers as in spring. So whenever a flock of the great grey birds does suddenly appear in late fall or early winter, it is always a thrilling surprise.

This flock I saw down below Manguerville was strung out in an irregular column of twos and ones and threes, not in any hurry apparently, for they did not make much progress, just holding their own against the current and not much more. A straggling line-ahead formation like that of big dark bodies and long upright necks is hard to count, but after going along the line four times I made it out to be just over fifty, 51 or 52 it might have been. They were a magnificent sight.

Lingering Great Blue Heron

A few miles farther down the road I had another surprise when I saw a great blue heron. November 26 seemed to me a very late date for one of these big herons to be lingering here, and comparing notes with another bird-watcher afterwards confirmed my impression. In the New Brunswick bird book there are mid December dates for great blue herons, but only at Saint John or along the Bay of Fundy somewhere, not up here in the middle of the St. John River Valley. In the spring they have been recorded before the end of March. My own first note of a great blue heron this year is dated 9 April.

I watched this late heron rise on its great wings from a side-channel of water, fly along a few yards, then land on the field a couple of feet from the water's edge. There was a light sprinkling of snow on the grass, but you can't tell from watching a heron what it may be thinking about the state of the ground and the water! This one took several deliberate strides, stood still a couple of minutes, walked into the shallow water, stood motionless for another minute, then stepped back on to the snowy grass. In the end it must, I suppose, have concluded that the prospect was uninviting,

for it flew off with strong, steady wingbeats, and I lost sight of it behind the trees.

Another unusual bird that I saw that day was a northern shrike. It was the first I had come upon this year.

Now, two species of shrikes occur in Canada. The book description of the northern shrike is like this: a grey and black robin-sized bird; crown, nape and back, light bluish grey, white on the rump, lower forehead and over the eye; a black mask from the base of the bill to the ear coverts; wings mostly black, with small patches of white; tail mainly black, but with white outer feathers; underparts white, with more or less of a fine, wavy, dusky barred pattern. That tail is rather long and the bird flicks it frequently while sitting perched on a tree top or other lookout. The only difficulty with the description of the northern shrike is that when you look what the book says about the loggerhead shrike you just find: "very similar to the northern, but smaller." And very similar it is, with the size not much help, for the length of a loggerhead shrike may be up to 9.2 inches and a northern shrike may measure as little as 9 inches, though 10 is the average.

Fortunately for the bird-watcher, the date when you see it may be a decisive field mark, so to speak. In the New Brunswick bird book, the northern shrike is listed as "rare winter resident or transient, season October 3 to April 23." Those of course are extreme recorded dates of observations. The loggerhead shrike is "rare summer resident, season March 28 to October 22." There is a slight overlap in the fall dates, but when a shrike is seen in the middle of New Brunswick late in November or any time on through February, it may be confidently set down as a northern shrike.



Blue Jay

DECEMBER

The Quiet Woods

The sun was shining on the snow and the air felt warmer than the twenty degrees the thermometer was marking when we went for a short walk one December Sunday in the Odell Park.

The woods trails were still usable, for the snow was only a half-inch carpet on the ground. There was peaceful beauty among the trees. It was not utterly silent, for water ran tinkling in streams, and there were occasional notes of birds and squirrels. The little noises were part of a general quietness.

Beech trees at this season contribute a wonderful note of colour. In the wood you see masses of dark evergreens with the taller tops showing a glow of reddish brown cones in the sun. Interspersed are the bare deciduous trees, forming intricate patterns of branches and twigs, but neutral in tone. Then in the middle of a sheltered open space you find a small beech still holding its complement of leaves, and there is a special richness in their bright brown.

There were tracks in the snow, of course. Not having the benefit of a country upbringing on this side of the Atlantic, I find tracks difficult. Looking at diagrams in a Field Guide afterwards, it seemed probable that we had seen the marks of snowshoe hares, many squirrels, a deer and a bobcat.

Making not only tracks in the snow but noises in the air, there were indeed squirrels all around us. At one point there was a momentary glimpse of a gray one, crossing from one tree to another, but mostly the little red squirrels made up the local population. We saw four individuals at different times. Two were working low branches and coming down one tree just to go up another six feet away. One was on a journey, apparently, moving steadily along on the ground, with just a pause every twenty yards or so to look round. The fourth sat tranquilly on the swaying, very slender outer end of a spray of evergreen high up, nibbling at the tips in the sunshine.

There seemed to be no birds. Then from a distance came the tapping of a woodpecker, followed by kwank-kwanks from two directions. Finally the maker of one of the kwanks calls showed up. It was a red-breasted nuthatch, its colour bright in the sun as it moved about among the top-most branches of an old, tall pine.

Then the little nuthatch flew away, for a time the scolding squirrels fell silent, and only the sound of water rushing fast over stones was to be heard in the deep peace of the quiet woods.

Hawks and a Raven

On the way down river, we were looking, naturally, to see rough-legged hawks again in the area just below McGowan's Corner. No hawks. We drove slowly a long way down, past the Upper Gagetown ferry. No hawks. It seemed that these early winter visitors must have moved on to the south.

Then just a couple of miles this side of Jensen we saw one. What might have been a clod of earth or tuft of dead grass on a snow-dappled field seemed to move a little. We

stopped, and looked with binoculars. It was a rough-leg all right, a light-phase bird, evidently finishing a meal of some captured rodent. Soon it spread its wings and rose slowly to circle round a few times just thirty or forty feet up, showing all white underneath, with the black markings at a minimum. It perched on a tree for a couple of minutes, then flew off into the background wood.

With three or four crows, that made the count of birds for the down-river drive!

We came back the same way about an hour later, and saw what was presumably the same hawk in about the same place, flying low. Then another, and another. Rough-legs every half-mile until we had counted seven!

At one point a raven drove one away. The hawk was perched on a tree when the raven alighted on the same branch. They both held position for a moment, then the raven fluttered round the hawk two or three times, to no effect. Then very oddly the raven grabbed a twig in his beak and swung from it in acrobatic antics immediately above the hawk, still utterly indifferent and motionless. Finally the raven walked up the branch to stand six inches behind him, where he appeared by the movement of his beak, though I heard no sound, to be telling that rough-leg just what he thought of him.

At that point the hawk must have wearied of the fuss, for he rose slowly and flew across the road, the raven chivvying him from above and just behind until the hawk stopped in another tree on the river bank. Apparently the raven was not interested in that side of the road, for he abandoned the harassing tactics and flapped off across the river.

Red Crossbills in the Trees

We did the Stanley circuit, going out one December day, by the Royal Road and returning by Taymouth and the Nashwaak Valley. All the hilly landscapes were beautiful in quiet grays and browns, and in the valleys the rivers were blue, edged here and there with dazzling white of ice shining in the sun.

There was no snow but it was wintertime for bird life. However, we saw birds in seven places and they included a species we had not previously come upon this year.

First was a raven, not far up the road from Nashwaak-sis. Then not a feather was to be seen until we saw, ten miles on, a Canada jay beside a dead hare on the gravel. Beyond Stanley there was another goryb, to give him his country name, and a third this side of Taymouth. Coming towards Taymouth by the side road I was driving past the end of a woods trail when my wife suggested that we should stop and walk up it a little way. Not that there would be birds, but it's a nice lane and we would remember the warblers and other summer things we had seen there many a time. Some intuition must have been working mysteriously! A hundred yards up the steep track, on a bare tree-top, we found a little flock of red crossbills. They were climbing about the twigs sideways, upside down, and even right way up, and in the sunshine they gleamed like jewels. They must have been females and young males, for the characteristic of the latter is orange colouring instead of the brick-red of older males, and it was orange, accentuated by the black wings, that predominated. We watched them for three or four minutes before they suddenly all rose and flew away. Just luck of place and moment coinciding had put crossbills in the year's notebook.

In the miles from there back into Fredericton there were only two more birds to add to the day's list, a blue jay and another raven.

A Leisurely Fox

We took advantage of the weather to go out into the country one late December weekend. There were few birds.

Up river for miles not a wing was beating. A side-excursion along Keswick Ridge was completely unproductive of anything but scenery. We made no complaint, for the scenery is worth going to see. The view from the top of the ridge at the far end is surely the most spectacular panorama of hills, beautiful at every season, in all New Brunswick.

Then, some miles up the valley, we met a red fox.

We were just moving slowly, looking for a good spot to halt for a sandwich, when we saw him twenty or thirty yards ahead, trotting gently along the road. We had rolled quietly to within ten yards before he took any notice of us. Then he turned to his left, crossed the road and went into a field with a lot of low rocks and bushes in it.

The fox did not go far, however. About ten yards from the road-shoulder he stopped, after turning to go in a direction opposite to that in which he had originally been headed.

We got out and went over to the side of the road to have a look at him. He turned his head our way and had a good look at us. Apparently he was just as interested as we were!

He was not so beautiful as some foxes we have seen, not so bright a red, but he was in his more dingy colouring a good specimen, black feet and white tail-tip well-marked. The dark part of his tail in the middle seemed unusually thick in its bushiness, perhaps as though extra hair had grown to compensate for some injury.

Three more times the fox moved along ten or fifteen yards and stopped for another look. I had never observed before what narrow, diagonal slits of eyes this animal presents when he gazes directly at you.

Finally the fox went off, slowly, and disappeared into the wood at the end of the field.

We turned the car and went a quarter-mile down the road before stopping for the sandwich. Almost immediately a ruffed grouse walked across the road sixty yards away. Three minutes later, it, or another one, ran across in the opposite direction hardly more than twenty yards from us. They were the first ruffed grouse we had seen that year.

Half a dozen blue jays and one Canada jay completed the bird list, but we counted it an interesting weekend.

The End

Check-list of New Brunswick Birds 1969

This list, compiled by Dr. Austin Squires, is included here by permission of the New Brunswick Museum. It contains all the species that are or have been known in this province.

The Museum makes the list available in the form of a handy card, extremely useful for keeping the score on birds seen during an outing, or a season or special period or count. These cards may be obtained from the Museum (Douglas Avenue, Saint John) at two for five cents, at the Museum or by mail.

I have been using the check-list cards for years. They are up-dated for reprinting every year or two. The following paragraphs are notes printed on the cards.

"This list includes all the species (337) which have been definitely identified in New Brunswick. Those in parentheses (72) are now extirpated or extinct or have been identified so few times that they must be regarded as accidental or very rare stragglers. Those marked with an asterisk (*) have been found breeding since 1900. In the present revision older breeding records are omitted.

"None of the species marked (†) have been collected or photographed in the province to the knowledge of the author although some of them are recorded frequently.

"The common names used are those approved by the American Ornithologists' Union.

"The New Brunswick Museum has an extensive collection of bird skins. Consult this collection, write for information; enquiries and reports are always welcome."

Common Loon*	(Manx Shearwater)
Red-throated Loon	Leach's Petrel*
Red-necked Grebe	Wilson's Petrel
Horned Grebe	(White Pelican)
Pied-billed Grebe*	Gannet
(Yellow-nosed Albatross)	Great Cormorant
(Fulmar)	Double-crested Cormorant*
(Cory's Shearwater) †	Great Blue Heron*
Greater Shearwater	Green Heron*
Sooty Shearwater	Little Blue Heron

Cattle Egret	Common Merganser*
Common Egret	Red-breasted Merganser*
(Snowy Egret)	(Turkey Vulture)
(Louisiana Heron)	(Black Vulture)
Black-crowned Night Heron*	Goshawk*
(Yellow-crowned Night Heron)	Sharp-shinned Hawk*
Least Bittern*	Cooper's Hawk*
American Bittern*	Red-tailed Hawk*
(Wood Ibis)	Red-shouldered Hawk*
(Glossy Ibis)	Broad-winged Hawk*
White Ibis†	Rough-legged Hawk
(Whistling Swan)	Golden Eagle
Canada Goose*	Bald Eagle*
Brant	Marsh Hawk*
(White-fronted Goose)	Osprey*
Snow Goose (inc. Blue Goose)	Gyrfalcon
(Fulvous Tree Duck)	Peregrine Falcon*
Mallard*	Pigeon Hawk
Black Duck*	Sparrow Hawk*
(Gadwall) †	Spruce Grouse*
Pintail*	Ruffed Grouse*
(Common Teal)	(Bobwhite*)
Green-winged Teal*	Ring-necked Pheasant*
Blue-winged Teal*	Gray Partridge*
(Cinnamon Teal) †	(Clapper Rail)
(European Widgeon)	Virginia Rail*
American Widgeon*	Sora*
Shoveler*	(Yellow Rail) *
Wood Duck*	(Purple Gallinule)
Redhead*	Common Gallinule
Ring-necked Duck*	American Coot*
(Canvasback)	(American Oystercatcher)
Greater Scaup	(Lapwing)
Lesser Scaup	Semipalmated Plover*
Common Goldeneye*	Piping Plover*
Barrow's Goldeneye	Killdeer*
Bufflehead	American Golden Plover
Oldsquaw	Black-bellied Plover
Harlequin Duck	Ruddy Turnstone
(Labrador Duck) extinct	American Woodcock*
Common Eider*	Common Snipe*
King Eider	(Long-billed Curlew)
White-winged Scoter	Whimbrel
Surf Scoter	(Eskimo Curlew)
Common Scoter	Upland Plover
Ruddy Duck	Spotted Sandpiper*
Hooded Merganser*	Solitary Sandpiper

Willet*
 Greater Yellowlegs
 Lesser Yellowlegs
 Knot
 Purple Sandpiper
 Pectoral Sandpiper
 White-rumped Sandpiper
 Baird's Sandpiper
 Least Sandpiper
 (Curlew Sandpiper)
 Dunlin
 Short-billed Dowitcher
 (Long-billed Dowitcher)
 Silt Sandpiper
 Semipalmated Sandpiper
 (Western Sandpiper) †
 (Buff-breasted Sandpiper)
 (Marbled Godwit)
 Hudsonian Godwit
 (Ruff)
 Sanderling
 (American Avocet)
 (Black-necked Stilt)
 Red Phalarope
 (Wilson's Phalarope)
 Northern Phalarope
 Pomarine Jaeger
 Parasitic Jaeger
 Long-tailed Jaeger
 Glaucous Gull
 Iceland Gull
 Great Black-backed Gull*
 Herring Gull*
 Ring-billed Gull*
 (Mew Gull)
 Black-headed Gull†
 Laughing Gull*
 (Franklin's Gull)
 Bonaparte's Gull
 (Ivory Gull)
 Black-legged Kittiwake
 (Sabine's Gull)
 (Gull-billed Tern)
 Common Tern*
 Arctic Tern*
 (Roseate Tern) †
 (Least Tern) †

Caspian Tern
 Black Tern*
 Black Skimmer
 (Great Auk) extinct
 Razorbill*
 Common Murre
 Thick-billed Murre
 Dovekie
 Black Guillemot*
 Common Puffin*
 Rock Dove*
 Mourning Dove*
 (Passenger Pigeon) extinct
 Yellow-billed Cuckoo
 Black-billed Cuckoo*
 (Barn Owl)
 (Screech Owl)
 Great Horned Owl*
 Snowy Owl
 Hawk Owl*
 Barred Owl*
 (Great Gray Owl)
 Long-eared Owl*
 Short-eared Owl*
 Boreal Owl*
 Saw-whet Owl*
 (Chuck-will's-widow)
 Whip-poor-will*
 Common Nighthawk*
 Chimney Swift*
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird*
 Belted Kingfisher*
 Yellow-shafted Flicker*
 Pileated Woodpecker*
 Red-headed Woodpecker
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker*
 Hairy Woodpecker*
 Downy Woodpecker*
 Black-backed 3-toed Wdpr.*
 Northern 3-toed Woodpecker*
 Eastern Kingbird*
 Western Kingbird
 (Scissor-tailed Flycatcher)
 Great Crested Flycatcher*
 Eastern Phoebe*
 Yellow-bellied Flycatcher*
 Traill's Flycatcher*

Least Flycatcher*
 Eastern Wood Pewee*
 Olive-sided Flycatcher*
 Horned Lark*
 Tree Swallow*
 Bank Swallow*
 (Rough-winged Swallow) †
 Barn Swallow*
 Cliff Swallow*
 Purple Martin*
 Gray Jay*
 Blue Jay*
 (Black-billed Magpie)
 Common Raven*
 Common Crow*
 Black-capped Chickadee*
 Boreal Chickadee*
 White-breasted Nuthatch*
 Red-breasted Nuthatch*
 Brown Creeper*
 House Wren*
 Winter Wren*
 Long-billed Marsh Wren*
 Short-billed Marsh Wren
 Mockingbird*
 Catbird*
 Brown Thrasher*
 Robin*
 (Varied Thrush)
 Wood Thrush*
 Hermit Thrush*
 Swainson's Thrush*
 Gray-cheeked Thrush
 Veery*
 Eastern Bluebird*
 (Wheatear)
 (Townsend's Solitaire)
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher†
 Golden-crowned Kinglet*
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet*
 Water Pipit
 Bohemian Waxwing
 Cedar Waxwing*
 Northern Shrike
 Loggerhead Shrike*
 Starling*
 Yellow-throated Vireo†

Solitary Vireo*
 Red-eyed Vireo*
 Philadelphia Vireo*
 Warbling Vireo†
 Black-and-White Warbler*
 (Prothonotary Warbler)
 (Golden-winged Warbler) †
 (Blue-winged Warbler) †
 Tennessee Warbler*
 Nashville Warbler*
 Parula Warbler*
 Yellow Warbler*
 Magnolia Warbler*
 Cape May Warbler*
 Black-throated Blue Warbler*
 Myrtle Warbler*
 Blk.-throated Green Warbler*
 Blackburnian Warbler*
 Chestnut-sided Warbler*
 Bay-breasted Warbler*
 Blackpoll Warbler*
 Pine Warbler
 (Prairie Warbler)
 Palm Warbler*
 Ovenbird*
 Northern Waterthrush*
 (Connecticut Warbler)
 Mourning Warbler*
 Yellowthroat*
 Yellow-breasted Chat
 (Hooded Warbler) †
 Wilson's Warbler*
 Canada Warbler*
 American Redstart*
 House Sparrow*
 Bobolink*
 Eastern Meadowlark*
 (Yellow-headed Blackbird) †
 Red-winged Blackbird*
 (Orchard Oriole)
 Baltimore Oriole*
 Rusty Blackbird*
 Common Grackle*
 Brown-headed Cowbird*
 Scarlet Tanager*
 Summer Tanager
 Cardinal

Rose-breasted Grosbeak*
 (Blue Grosbeak)
 Indigo Bunting
 Dickcissel
 Evening Grosbeak*
 Purple Finch*
 Pine Grosbeak*
 (European Goldfinch) ‡
 Common Redpoll
 Pine Siskin*
 American Goldfinch*
 Red Crossbill*
 White-winged Crossbill*
 Rufous-sided Towhee
 (Lark Bunting)
 Ipswich Sparrow
 Savannah Sparrow*
 (Grasshopper Sparrow)

Sharp-tailed Sparrow*
 (Seaside Sparrow)
 Vesper Sparrow
 Lark Sparrow
 Slate-coloured Junco*
 Tree Sparrow
 Chipping Sparrow*
 Field Sparrow
 White-crowned Sparrow
 White-throated Sparrow*
 Fox Sparrow*
 Lincoln's Sparrow*
 Swamp Sparrow*
 Song Sparrow*
 Lapland Longspur
 (Chestnut-collared Longspur)
 Snow Bunting

SOME BOOKS ON MY SHELVES

Anyone who gets interested in birds soon finds that one or two books are practically necessary. As his enthusiasm grows, he concludes that a few more are desirable. Here I list those I have found most useful and interesting, with a little information and comment offered as a guide for new bird-watchers who may be wondering where to start.

The first one is in my opinion absolutely essential. Every bird-watcher needs it to identify new species, so it should always be handy in the pocket or in the car.

1. *A Field Guide to the Birds* by Roger Tory Peterson (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Mass.). When first published in 1934 this was a new kind of bird book and the artist-author had a long search for a publisher. It soon became a steady year by year best-seller in successive revised and improved editions. It is a book meant to help in the identification of living birds in the field, using coloured plates that emphasize characteristic distinctive features. With these are notes giving sizes, preferred habitat, marks that distinguish a bird from similar species, and so on. Peterson is famous as one of the world's outstanding ornithologists and bird painters. There are other field guides now, but this in my opinion is still the best, and absolutely indispensable. Designed to use out of doors, it fits handily in a pocket, and is available at any bookstore.

2. *The Birds of Canada* by W. Earl Godfrey (National Museum of Natural Sciences). This splendid book was published in 1966. It is a large volume with over 400 pages of 11 by 8½ inches, describing 518 species, all the birds known to occur, or to have occurred, in Canada. The information given includes measurements, colour and pattern of plumage, field marks, habitat, nesting, range, subspecies, and remarks, by the National Museum's chief ornithologist. It contains also more than sixty superb colour plates by John A. Crosby, many line drawings by S. D. MacDonald and small clear maps showing the breeding areas of the species that breed in Canada. For good measure it is very well written, so that

when you take it down to look up a single point you are apt to follow Dr. Godfrey for the next few pages. It is obtainable at bookstores or from the Queen's Printer in Ottawa and I regard it as amazingly good value at its \$12.50 price.

3. *The Birds of New Brunswick* by W. Austin Squires (The New Brunswick Museum). A very useful little book, this is in effect a statistical monograph, listing all our New Brunswick bird species, with information on their abundance or scarcity, their dates and seasons, dated records of nesting and so on. It is, I am informed, still available in paperback form at the Museum, price \$2, but the edition is getting pretty low in stock. This New Brunswick book does not describe the birds. For that you need *The Birds of Canada* or *The Birds of Nova Scotia*.

4. *The Birds of Nova Scotia* by Robie W. Tufts (The Nova Scotia Museum). This fine Nova Scotia book serves well of course for the Maritimes in general. It runs to 480 pages, with 40 colour plates mostly by Roger Tory Peterson but some by John Crosby and line drawings by John H. Dick. The text deals fully with description, residential or visiting status, breeding, range and so on and it has a wealth of personal observations of bird behaviour with a characteristic flavour that only Robie Tufts could have written. I find that I use it very frequently as a reference book and that I can sit down to reread pages of it with enjoyment at any time. This book was published in 1962 and the Director of the Museum tells me that the stock is getting low now, though at \$7.50 it is still available there or in bookstores. Add 25c for mailing cost if ordering from the Nova Scotia Museum in Halifax.

5. *The Birds of Newfoundland* by Harold S. Peters and Thomas D. Burleigh (Department of Natural Resources, Province of Newfoundland). The Newfoundland book, published in 1951, is illustrated by thirty-two full-page colour plates by Roger Tory Peterson. Its 450 pages deal with all the 227 species of birds that have been recorded in Newfoundland, under the headings of description, field marks, voice, nest and eggs, range, status in Newfoundland,

and habits. It is an excellent provincial manual, well-written and informative, but is no longer on sale to the general public. Anyone wishing to procure a copy will have to try the secondhand book dealers.

6. *Birds of North America* by Chandler S. Robbins, Bertel Bruun and Herbert S. Zim (A Golden Field Guide, Golden Press, New York). This is a valuable field guide that bird-watchers addicted to Peterson are apt to use as a supplementary help. For those in the Maritimes it has a special advantage in its completeness, for it is of use in identifying casual visiting birds from the western half of the country not included in the eastern manuals we all use here. It gives coloured pictures and field marks for all the birds likely to be found north of Mexico.

7. *Birds of Canada* by P. A. Taverner (The National Museum). Before the appearance of Earl Godfrey's book, this was the standard work of reference on Canadian birds. It had long been out of print and for about twenty years obtainable only secondhand. I still turn to its pages from time to time for alternative details of bird descriptions and particularly for its discussions of the "economic" characteristics of the different species.

8. An enormous and lavishly illustrated book called *Birds of the World* by Oliver L. Austin Jr. is useful for making comparisons of our birds with those of other lands. My copy is an English edition presented to me one Christmas, with copyright notice by the Golden Books firm in New York.

9. The two volumes, first of a series, called *Birds of the Northern Forest* and *Birds of the Eastern Forest I* (McClelland and Stewart) combine the wonderful bird paintings of J. Fenwick Lansdowne with the always interesting notes and comments of John Livingston.

10. For the mammals I have *The Mammals of New Brunswick* by W. Austin Squires (The New Brunswick Museum); *A Field Guide to the Mammals* by William Henry Burt (Houghton Mifflin Company, in the Peterson Field

Guide Series); *The Mammals of Eastern Canada* by Randolph L. Peterson (Oxford University Press, Toronto). All are very good in their respective fields.

11. For information and advice on binoculars, telescopes, bird houses, trees and other plants that attract birds, bird photography, censuses, conservation and other related matters, a good book is *The Bird Watcher's Guide* by Henry Hill Collins Jr. (Golden Press, New York).

12. Anyone interested in birds will find many hours of fascinating reading in *Birds in Our Lives*, edited by Alfred Stefferud and Arnold L. Nelson (United States Fish and Wildlife Service). It is a book of large format, over 550 pages size 8 by 11 inches, very well illustrated and its aim, in the editors' words, is "to give a wide perspective of birds as they affect and are affected by people, other birds, and other forms of life and activities." It may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. for \$9 and that is another wonderful bargain in my view.

Over the years I have gathered a good many more books on birds and wildlife generally and I am inclined to the view, to adapt a familiar saying, that there is no such thing as a bad bird book, though some are better than others. Those I have listed are my working dozen, those to which I refer most often with profit and enjoyment.

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